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REPORT

An Evaluation of the Suitability of the Nal'ibali Story Materials

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RESEARCH • IMPLEMENTATION • MONITORING & EVALUATION

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Acronyms and abbreviations

AI	Artificial Intelligence
CFG	Child focus group
ECD	Early Childhood Development
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
JET	JET Education Services
KII	Key informant interview
LOLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
Max	maximum
Min	minimum
NECT	National Education Collaboration Trust
NRB	National Reading Barometer
Obs	observations
PCI	Provincial coordinator interview
PFG	Parent focus group
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
POPI	Protection of Personal Information
POPI	Protection of Personal Information Act
RCLI	Reading Club Leader Interview
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
SEF	Social Employment Fund
Std. Dev.	standard deviation
TNF	Trevor Noah Foundation
VW	Volkswagen

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Nal'ibali was established in 2012 as a reading-for-enjoyment campaign that aims to spark children's potential through storytelling and reading and build a culture of reading for enjoyment in South Africa, in all the official languages of the country. Its interventions include the delivery of quality reading materials in South African languages and the upskilling of adults who work with youth and have the potential to become reading champions and role models and facilitate reading clubs for learners. Through these activities, Nal'ibali seeks to create opportunities for and a culture of reading that will enhance children's cognitive and socio-emotional development, contributing to reading outcomes that support academic achievement and eventual employment as well as other positive social and personal benefits such as improved health and better social cohesion.

According to the Nal'ibali 2023-2027 strategic plan (n.d.), the organisation has renewed its focus promoting regular early language and literacy simulation for children from birth to age six, increase reading for enjoyment amongst school age children, increase community reading spaces and opportunities, amplify interactive social behaviour communication to strengthen reading cultures, and strengthen their ability to generate and use evidence and insight for ongoing improvement, thought leadership and advocacy. In 2021, following a change in leadership, Nal'ibali reviewed and confirmed its purpose and priorities within the current South African context, and in 2023, Nal'ibali identified the need for an evaluation to gather and consolidate information 'from the ground' to gauge whether the materials it supplies are meeting market demands.

This research focused on evaluating the current database of stories, evaluating the reading preferences of Nal'ibali's target audience of children and their caretakers and considering the cost-benefit of different methods of delivering stories to these individuals.

The key questions the research set out to answer were:

- What would Nal'ibali's target audience like to read? Where would they like to source the material? And what are their language preferences?
- What is the profile of Nal'ibali's existing story repository in terms of length, themes and language complexity?
- How well is Nal'ibali meeting market needs? This assessment should consider the costs of production and the potential reach for various materials.
- What are potential gaps and recommendations to increase uptake of Nal'ibali materials via changes to provisioning strategy, delivery platforms, delivery formats and/or delivery content with regards to each age group and designed to scale?

To respond to these research questions, JET Education Services (JET) designed a mixed-methods evaluation consisting of a quantitative evaluation profiling the existing Nal'ibali story database, a cost analysis, the delivery of a short beneficiary survey over WhatsApp, a collocation analysis of the existing story corpus and qualitative research in two South African provinces, Gauteng and the Eastern Cape. Appropriate analysis strategies were applied for each methodology, and the findings were triangulated and evaluated using an analysis matrix which allowed for the aggregation and composite analysis of information gleaned across discrete parts of the evaluation.

Structure of the report

This report is structured in four parts.

1. Part 1 briefly outlines Nal'ibali as an organisation, the scope of the research and research questions.
2. Part 2 provides details on the approach, research design and methodologies employed for the evaluation. It also discusses the ethical issues raised by the research and mitigation strategies as well as limitations of the research.
3. Part 3 presents the research findings for each methodology. The analysis and findings represent a significant effort that drew in aspects of qualitative research, quantitative research and economic analysis as well as a 'light touch' linguistics-based corpus analysis. The results presented in this chapter form the foundations for conclusions and recommendations.
4. Part 4 offers a discussion on the key findings of the evaluation in aggregate and in relation to the key research questions as well as conclusions and recommendations linked to these key findings.

Key recommendations

The key recommendations supported by the research are:

Reintroduce story creation into the Nal'ibali portfolio. Although Nal'ibali has moved away from story creation in its strategy, it seems there is both a general enjoyment of Nal'ibali resources and a call for the creation of more and more varied stories, particularly with more diverse characters. A recommendation would be to potentially dedicate some resources towards exploring new niches and creating stories to fill them.

Market testing pre- or post-publication. If stories are created, pre-publication market tests could help to ensure that they are aligned to market interests and needs.

Expanding the pool of authors for Nal'ibali stories. Nal'ibali does put out general calls for stories which allow a broad range of people to participate, and there is no evidence that the curation of stories is heavily biased in any direction. However, perhaps targeted efforts need to be made towards diverse representation in the Nal'ibali stories.

Implementing a feedback loop on stories (particularly those downloaded) for ongoing data collection. Data collection methods such as the WhatsApp survey used could be integrated into systems so that a random selection of downloads prompts participation in a short survey. This would allow Nal'ibali to gather important feedback on a regular basis.

Continue to update the Nal'ibali dataset with new stories as they are added. The existing dataset is an excellent start. Going forward, the dataset should focus on standardisation and layout so that analysis can be automated and feedback gathered regularly.

Create more stories for younger children. A gap in story provision seems to be single-word and simple readers geared towards Grade R and preschool, although, as noted, picture books were not evaluated.

Consider more stories and types of stories for middle grade children. The Nal'ibali database predominantly includes stories suited for children up to Grade 3, with very few stories especially designed for children in Grade 5-8. Nal'ibali may wish to consider reading campaigns targeted specifically to children in middle grades in order to continuously build a generation of readers as well as introduce a higher complexity of language

naturally into children's lexicons through exposure. Another potential direction for expansion is into early chapter books in African languages, but given the poor response of the market to the idea of purchasing books, the heavy focus on English reading and poverty constraints, this is likely only feasible as a donor or government-funded initiative. Advocacy would be necessary.

Recommendations of family, gender and setting

Make conscious decisions about gender representation in Nal'ibali stories, with attention to action (e.g., whether the character acts or is acted upon) and emotion. As noted in the analysis, Nal'ibali is fairly well balanced in terms of the representation of girls and boys, with the caveat that girls are included in the corpus at less than half the rate of boys. More stories focused on girls could be beneficial to balance the corpus a bit more, particularly if girls are 'actors' and achieve change or growth in the stories.

Make a conscious decision about representations of family aligned to Nal'ibali values. There is a call for more diversity among characters in Nal'ibali, and this may extend to greater complexity in family relationships. For example, stories may focus more on extended families living under the same roof, or include more relationships between adults – currently, the majority of stories focus on a single parent (more often the mother, but sometimes the father) and the child. Additionally, the issue of LGBTQ+ representation and different family structures should be carefully considered.

Take action to represent school and learning more positively. Nal'ibali may be working at cross-purposes with itself if its theory of change is focused in part on scholastic achievement, while its stories do not actively promote engagement in learning at school.

Language and delivery recommendations

Invest in radio stories, which achieve the largest reach per rand. Radio stories reach the largest audience and cost less than television stories to produce. Radio stories incur a unit cost of R0,0056 per listener, while television stories incur a slightly higher unit cost of R0,0078 per viewer. On the other hand, WhatsApp and website stories show cost advantages by using existing production resources without incurring additional printing and distribution costs. This is an area of potential further investment. In addition, the strong response to the WhatsApp survey in terms of numbers as well as the statistics about usage are encouraging. WhatsApp and Radio have a similar profile in terms of cost for reach. (One out-of-the-box suggestion to push towards building a reading culture is to ask or even incentivise popular television shows to include a scene with an adult reading to a child or talking to another adult about the importance of reading or even name-dropping Nal'ibali – if Generations or Muvhango did this once or twice there could be a significant impact.)

Partnerships for delivery. Excluding the cost of staffing, distribution via special projects forms one of the most cost-effective methods of delivery for supplements. However, this also constitutes the smallest portion of distribution efforts. A concerted effort to grow this aspect of the organisation and a distribution network of special projects may yield results (for example, targeting non-governmental organisations (NGOs) with implementation projects, or University students embarking on internships). Distribution via partners is slightly more expensive than distribution via the post office (0.05 rand per unit), but the cost can add up over the long term.

Partner with schools as distribution sites. It is not sustainable for Provincial Coordinators to fill in the delivery gaps caused by post office dysfunctionality. Schools may offer alternative distribution sites that could be

explored. An advantage to schools over business partners such as supermarkets is that school staff may utilise the resources and also act as champions for them if buy-in is secured.

INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH

1 About Nal'ibali

Persistent low literacy levels of South African children are well-documented and remain a reason for continued intervention in both governmental and non-governmental spheres. Most recently, the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2021 assessment demonstrated that 81% of Grade 4 learners in the country were unable to read for meaning in any language (DBE, 2023).

Moreover, an earlier pre-PIRLS study in 2011 that included Grade 4 learners from three countries found South African learners performed the worst, with 82% of children not being able to read for meaning (van Staden, Bosker & Bergbauer, 2016). Slight improvements were recorded in the 2016 PIRLS study, with the results showing that 79% of South African children were not able to read for meaning (Howie et al., 2016). The recent 2021 PIRLS results show that internationally, 10-year-olds across all participating countries scored 500 points on average, while South African learners scored far below this at 288 (DBE, 2023). According to PIRLS, a score below 400 means that learners have not mastered the reading skills required to retrieve basic information from a text and answer simple questions; in other words learners scoring below this range cannot read for meaning. This indicates that only 19% of children tested in South Africa can read for meaning. Although South Africa can be credited for being the only Sub-Saharan country to participate in PIRLS, when compared to countries with similar GDPs such as Brazil, where 61% of children can read for meaning, South Africa still performs quite poorly (JET, 2023). While efforts continue on the part of both international donors and the South African government to close achievement gaps, research continues to indicate insufficient literacy levels among all grades (Shiohira, 2019).

Against this backdrop of inadequate literacy skills and poor levels of achievement, Nal'ibali was established in 2012 as a reading-for-enjoyment campaign that aims to spark children's potential through storytelling and reading and build a culture of reading for enjoyment in South Africa, in all the official languages of the country (Nal'ibali, 2023). Although the campaign aims to reach people of all classes, races and age groups, the primary target group is adults who live and work with children and are or have the potential to become reading role models, especially focusing on children in the age group birth to 12.

The power of language and cultural relevance in literacy development is taken into consideration, and Nal'ibali promotes reading and writing in South Afican mother tongue languages as well as the development of materials in those languages. Nal'ibali produces a 16-page bilingual reading supplement printed in newspaper format monthly, from February to November (10 editions a year). Each supplement edition contains: three stories (two of which can be folded and cut out to create small newsprint books); motivational messaging and information about reading for enjoyment; 'Get Story Active' suggestions to help teachers, reading club leaders and caregivers extend the story with children; interviews with literacy activists; news from Nal'ibali's network of reading clubs; and games and activities for children. All language versions include English and a second language. The supplement is produced in 11 of South Africa's spoken official national languages: Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiZulu, Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, and Xitsonga. In addition to the supplements, Nal'ibali also broadcasts audio stories on all the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) education radio stations as well as via a national community radio network, reaching a total of 8.2 million listeners in 2021 (Nal'ibali, 2021). Other material includes story seeds and story

cards as well as multilingual rhymes (Nal'ibali, 2023). Since 2021, Nal'ibali has broadened its reach by airing a segment on SABC 1 Kids News, led by children as storytellers. A total of 38.3 million viewers were reached through this new medium (Nal'ibali, 2021).
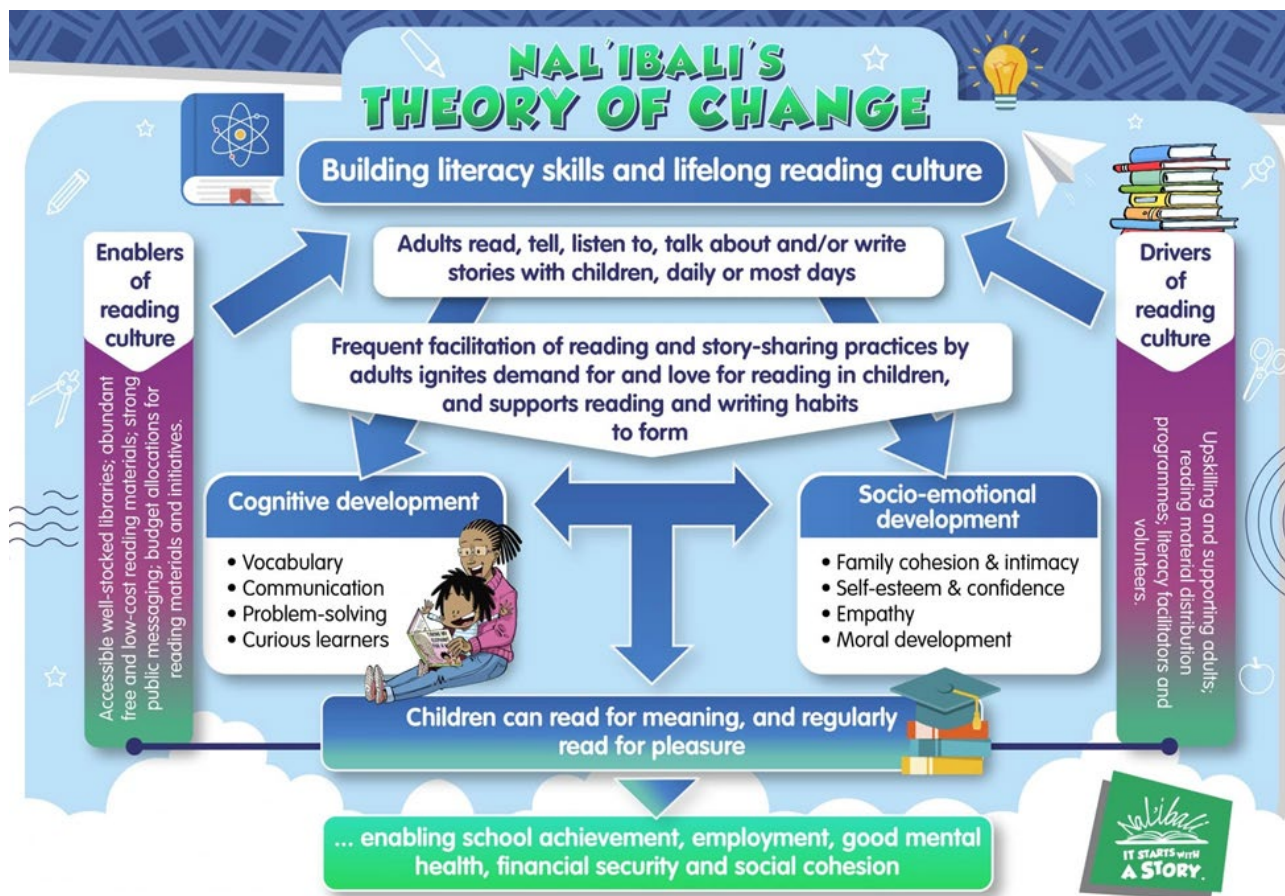
Figure 1: The Nal'ibali Theory of Change

Premised on research that shows that cognitively, storybook reading and storytelling make a critical contribution to literacy development through building vocabulary and the skill of reading for meaning (Hart & Risley, 2003), Nal'ibali's Theory of Change (Figure 1) recognises that storybook reading and storytelling benefit children both cognitively and emotionally[1]. Reading contributes to a strong vocabulary, improvement in all areas of communication including listening, speaking, reading and writing, better problem-solving skills and increased curiosity. Additionally, books in the home are important as research shows that children from low-income families with uneducated parents in a home with more than 25 books are likely to achieve two more years of schooling than children in a home with no books (Evans, Kelly, Sikora & Treiman, 2010). Research also shows that emotionally, storybook reading and storytelling in a safe, familial environment promotes family cohesion and intimacy, boosts children's self-esteem and contributes to them becoming confident students (Hoyne & Egan, 2019).

Since 2020, Nal'ibali has had to cut down on staffing and revise its strategy. Under new leadership, and guided by the Nal'ibali 2023-2027 strategic plan, Nal'ibali has a renewed focus promoting regular early language and literacy simulation for children from birth to age six, increase reading for enjoyment amongst school age children, increase community reading spaces and opportunities, amplify interactive social behaviour

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[1] Note that a review of Nal'ibali's Theory of Change is currently nearing completion, but the new iteration was not available at the time of this research.

communication to strengthen reading cultures, and strengthen their ability to generate and use evidence and insight for ongoing improvement, thought leadership and advocacy. Using three pillars of implementation namely, national communication campaigns, evidence-based learning and thought leadership, and programme interventions that reinforce and sustain behavioural change, Nal'ibali is positioned as an organisation that builds reading and story-sharing habits in homes, schools and communities to promote and build literacy skills and a lifelong reading culture (Nal'ibali, n.d.).

1.1 The scope and purpose of the current research

In 2023, Nal'ibali identified the need for an evaluation to gather and consolidate information 'from the ground' in order to gauge whether the materials it supplies meet market demands. The call for proposals focused on evaluating the current database of stories, evaluating the reading preferences of Nal'ibali's target audience of children and their caretakers and considering the cost-benefit of different methods of delivering stories to these individuals.

The research questions focus on aspects of access, quality, market needs and sustainability and uptake. The key research questions for this evaluation are outlined in Table 1. The full analysis matrix was approved by Nal'ibali staff prior to the start of data collection.

Table 1: Evaluation criteria and questions

Evaluation criteria	Evaluation questions
Access	What would Nal'ibali's target audience would like to read? Where would they like to source the material? And what are their language preferences?
Quality	What is the profile of Nal'ibali's existing story repository in terms of length, themes, and language complexity?
Market	How well is Nal'ibali meeting market needs? This assessment should consider the costs of production and the potential reach for various materials.
Sustainability and Uptake	What are potential gaps and recommendations to increase uptake of Nal'ibali materials via changes to provisioning strategy, delivery platforms, delivery formats, and/or delivery content, with regards to each age group and designed to scale?

2 Research design and methodology

The researchers JET utilised for this project included a strong team with prior experience in both education and literacy work, allowing the researchers to leverage skills in literacy and social constructivism as well as prior knowledge of Nal'ibali.

JET adopted a utilisation-focused mixed-methods approach to this evaluation. A utilisation-focused approach allows the primary intended users to guide decisions about how an evaluation should be conducted and thereby make use of the evaluation findings for results-oriented programme management and improvement. The premise of utilisation-focused evaluation is that 'evaluations should be judged by their utility and actual use' (Patton, 2013). Evaluators should thus design and facilitate evaluations with careful consideration for how every decision and activity will affect use. A good mixed-methods design involves collecting both

quantitative and qualitative data and responds to a framework of interrogation to which both quantitative and qualitative data make valuable contributions (Creswell, 2009). With the focus on understanding the varying contexts and conditions of the project, five different evaluation strategies were employed for this research:

1. An analysis of the existing Nal'ibali database to determine quantitative trends in difficulty, age/grade level, story themes and language of delivery;
2. A cost analysis of the projected 2023 cost of different delivery mechanisms for Nal'ibali, including a per-unit cost[2];
3. A short WhatsApp survey, delivered to the Nal'ibali database, which gathered information about preferred reading languages and themes.
4. Qualitative research (key informant interviews [KIIs] undertaken with reading club members, parents and leaders in two provinces as well as with Nal'ibali staff in order to gather rich qualitative data on reading preferences, access and uptake;
5. A collocation analysis of the existing and accessible Nal'ibali database to examine themes related to common settings and relationships across the Nal'ibali stories.

Each of these methodologies is briefly described in its own sub-section below.

2.1   Analysis of the existing Nal'ibali database

As part of the research, JET conducted an audit of the existing material in the story repository by characteristics such as length, theme and language complexity. The Nal'ibali Story Materials Suitability Evaluation is an independent evaluation of the efficacy of the story materials provided by the Nal'ibali reading for enjoyment campaign. The evaluation was conceptualised to focus on the fit between existing stories and reading materials distributed by Nal'ibali and the target beneficiaries' preferred content. This document reports the findings from a desktop audit of the Nal'ibali story archive as well as from the short survey disseminated through the existing Nal'ibali WhatsApp platform. These instruments and this analysis were designed to answer these specific evaluation questions:

● What is the profile of Nal'ibali's existing story repository in terms of length, themes and language complexity?
● What would Nal'ibali's target audience like to read?
● Where would the target audience like to source reading material?
● What are the language preferences of the target audience?

Nal'ibali provided a spreadsheet containing descriptive information for each story, including where the story can be accessed, the number of and which languages it is available in, the age range the story was designed for and the word count in English. This spreadsheet contained 512 stories in total. These stories were not accessible as part of the database, however, and, as a result, JET had to use the titles to source the stories elsewhere. Due in part to stories that were not accessible via links and in part to the removal of duplicates in the database, a total of 214 stories were included in the analysis.

Regarding the stories that JET did have at its disposal, a systematic analysis was carried out. The stories were processed and captured for key metrics across five languages: English, isiZulu, Northern Sotho (Sepedi),

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[2]The cost analysis for the evaluation relied on cost data for a range of delivery modalities between 2022-2023 as well as recent data from the National Reading Barometer (2023). Other data related to beneficiary reach was requested from Nal'ibali but was not available in time. JET has agreed to produce a short annexure with these findings to present to Nal'ibali by the end of July, after the close of the contract. For this report, only available data was analysed.

Xitsonga, Tshivenda[3]. The capturing process involved capturing the language of these stories according to the following metrics: word count, words per sentence and syllables per word. Text complexity was measured using the 'Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level' and 'Flesch Reading Ease' tests (Good Calculators, 2023). These metrics were captured for English stories only as no identical, reliable tool was available for other languages. JET thus added data to the database for all qualifying entries in four African languages[4] and in English, including word counts, the average letters per word and words per sentence. Although traditional formulas to analyse difficulty do not work well in these African languages, they were able to provide an idea of the *relative complexity* of the stories in each language analysed. The data was captured using Google Sheets and cleaned and analysed using Stata16 and R version 4.3.0.

2.2   Cost analysis

The cost analysis aimed to evaluate and quantify the expenses associated the Nal'ibali story materials intervention. In line with the principles of cost-effectiveness analysis outlined by Levin and McEwan (2001), the ingredients method is a cost analysis approach that considers the various components or 'ingredients' of a programme or intervention, each of which has a value or cost associated with it. This method breaks down the programme or intervention into its component parts and assigns costs to each individual component. The ingredients method focuses on identifying and quantifying the resources required for programme implementation by itemising and valuing the different elements such as personnel, materials, equipment, training and other inputs that are necessary for delivering the programme or intervention. By explicitly identifying and assigning costs to each ingredient, the method provides a comprehensive view of the resources needed and their associated costs. The total cost of the programme or intervention is estimated as the sum of all the ingredients' costs. Similarly, cost per unit of effectiveness or benefit can be estimated. The costs can be discounted for the time value of money. The main advantage of the ingredeints method is that it is easy to understand and use. The main disadvantage is the challenge of estimating the right proportions when ingredients are used for multiple tasks as well as ingredients that cannot be quantified easily.

Using information from the National Reading Barometer (NRB) (2023), existing beneficiary data and information related to production costs obtained from Nal'ibali, JET conducted a cost analysis using the ingredient method to outline the primary cost drivers of each delivery method as well as their potential reach. JET identified key cost categories relevant to the intervention to capture a comprehensive view of costs. The data collection process involved discussions with the Nal'ibali team and consultations with their production and translation coordinator to ensure that the data collected was accurate, reliable and representative of the intervention's costs. The costs were then allocated to their respective categories. This enabled JET to evaluate the cost of the intervention by comparing the incurred costs with the achieved outcomes or impact. A cost analysis was conducted to evaluate the cost per unit of outcome and to evaluate the efficiency and value-for-money of the intervention. By following the methodology grounded on the principles of cost-effectiveness analysis, JET was able to conduct a cost analysis and gain insights into the financial implications of the intervention.

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[3] These languages were chosen for analysis as between them they had the largest representation across the provinces that were included in the evaluation.

[4] These languages were chosen for analysis as between them they had the largest representation across the provinces included for the analysis.

2.2.1 Data and Processing

The cost data was provided in the form of spreadsheets and via telephone and email conversations. All data was collated and put into a consistent form. All the costs and quantities are for the 2022 financial year. Various ingredient costs were identified and coded. A disadvantage of the method used is that data is subject to availability and accuracy of the data can be affected by recall error in the knowledge chain between Nal'ibali and the evaluator (JET). This can hinder the accuracy of the results.

2.2.2 Nal'ibali ingredients

Information for this part of the evaluation was derived from a thorough review of the documents provided by Nal'ibali and via discussions with Nal'ibali's production and translation coordinator. Based on the data available, the following modes of Nal'ibali story delivery are considered:

- *Supplements:* these include magazine and newspaper inserts, distributed through various channels (post office, partners, special projects)
- *Digital platforms, television and radio:* this incuded hosting, posting and delivery of story supplements through the Nal'ibali website and WhatsApp subscription channel and the professional public television and radio broadcast adaptations of those stories.

Nal'ibali delivers stories through other platforms such as books and magazines inserts, but analysis of these platforms was limited owing to the unavailability of data.

The ingredients identified for each delivery channel considered are as follows:

Supplements

Key cost categories

- **Production costs**, which include authoring, editing, translation, design and digital storage processes (From Supplement costs_For JET.xlsx);
- **Printing and packaging**, which is broken down by pagination (16 pages average full-print), and with costs distributed unevenly, depending on the distribution channel;
- **Distribution of supplements** through the following channels: (recorded in '22 Booking Breakdown.xlsx')
  - Newspapers (3 newspapers)
  - Post offices (SA Post and Partner Post)
  - Partners (NECT, Lesedi, Letsatsi, Social Employment Fund [SEF], Volkswagen (VW), Yizane Sifunde, Standard Bank)
  - Special projects (Lebalelo, Trevor Noah Foundation (TNF) because they have free print costs)

Reach

- Number of supplements printed;
- Number of average readers.

Digital platforms, television and radio

Key cost categories

- Production costs, which include all input costs related to the derivation of the story (noting that WhatsApp and Website stories share the same production costs as story supplements, described above) as well as the costs of the multimedia broadcasts, where applicable.

Reach (from 'Nal'ibali-JET Story Materials.doc'):

- Number of shows aired (television and radio);
- Website visits and click rate (defined by number of pageviews, bounce-rate).

2.3 WhatsApp survey

Nal'ibali launched a WhatsApp-based distribution channel in 2021, with a database of roughly 10000 contacts in 2023. A short, voluntary survey was designed in consultation with Nal'ibali during the inception phase of the evaluation. The survey questions were reviewed and revised in consultation with Nal'ibali staff before the survey was finalised and implemented. The survey, using Google Forms, comprised three demographic questions and five story-related questions and was disseminated to the Nal'ibali contact database. The survey was made available to respondents between the 22nd and 31st of May 2023 and received a total of 346 responses, with 344 being the final total after removing duplicates. The survey responses were transferred from Google Forms to Google Sheets and the data cleaned and analysed using Stata16 and R version 4.3.0.

The survey included questions on the following:

- Respondent details (e.g., name, relationship to Nal'ibali materials, age, gender, province and contact information);
- Preference for/against and frequency of engagement with stories via WhatsApp;
- Types and source of materials read to children;
- Preferred themes for stories read to children;
- Preferred languages.

The tables below reflect the demographic data collected via the survey.

The majority of respondents identified as reading club leaders/members, constituting 26.50% of the sample with 91 observations. Parent/caregivers also represent a significant proportion, accounting for 21.20% with 73 observations. Other stakeholder groups, such as ECD practitioners (14.8%), literacy facilitators/other (19.5%), and teachers/educators (6.1%), are also well-represented in the data set. The "Other" responses include various roles mentioned by a subset of respondents, with 'story sparker' being the most common (observed 13 times).

Table 2: WhatsApp survey participants by stakeholder group

Stakeholder group	Obs[5]	Percent
ECD practitioner	51	14.8%
Teacher/educator	21	6.1%
Parent/caregiver	73	21.2%

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[5] Refers to number of respondents.

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Stakeholder group	Obs[5]	Percent
Librarian	14	4.1%
Literacy facilitator/other	67	19.5%
Reading club leader/member	91	26.5%
Other	22	6.4%
Missing	5	1.5%
Total	344	100.0%

Unfortunately, not all responses for age were captured accurately enough to include in the analysis.

Table 3 presents data on the gender distribution of the respondents. Females constitute the majority of the respondents, accounting for 86.9% of the sample, while males make up the remaining 13.1%.

Table 3: Gender of survey respondents

Gender	Obs	Percent
Female	299	86.9%
Male	45	13.1%
Total	344	100.0%

Table 4 shows the age characteristics within each gender category. The mean age for females is 36.67, with a median age of 34. The age range for females spans from 19 to 66 years old. For males, the mean age is slightly lower at 35.50, with a median age of 35.50. The age range for males is between 19 and 56 years old. Overall, the total sample showcases an average age of 36.08, with a median of 34.50, and an age range from 19 to 66 years old.

Table 4: Age by gender of survey respondents

Age by Gender	Obs	mean	median	min	max
Female	293	36.67	34	19	66
Male	44	35.50	35.5	19	56
Total	337	36.08	34.5	19	66

Table 5 below provides information on the distribution of respondents by age across different provinces. From this table it is evident that Gauteng has the highest number of female respondents, with 95, representing 29.10% of the total sample. The Western Cape follows closely behind with 44 female respondents, accounting for 14.00% of the sample. The table further explores the age characteristics within each province. For instance, in Gauteng, the mean age is 35.85, with a median age of 32. Conversely, the

Western Cape has a lower mean age of 30.98, with a median age of 29. The age ranges differ across provinces, ranging from 20 to 66 years old in the Eastern Cape and from 19 to 57 years old in the Western Cape.

Table 5: Age by province of survey respondents

Age by Province	Obs	Percent	mean	median	min	max
Gauteng	95	29.1%	35.85	32	19	63
Western Cape	44	14.0%	30.98	29	19	57
Limpopo	44	13.1%	39.91	39	22	63
KwaZulu-Natal	37	10.8%	36.97	33	20	60
Eastern Cape	31	9.9%	37.58	36	20	66
Mpumalanga	30	9.0%	37.47	33	24	60
Free State	29	8.4%	36.48	35	25	62
Northern Cape	10	3.2%	36.70	36.5	23	57
North West	8	2.6%	43.88	42	27	64
Total	328	100%	37.31	35	19	66

2.4   Key informant interviews and focus groups

Interviews and focus groups were undertaken with beneficiaries in two provinces. Participants included children, parents, ground-level Nal'ibali staff and reading club leaders. Through inteviews and focus groups, the evaluation sought to understand participant's different 'journeys into habitual reading' and to better understand what motivated participants to pick up/sustain a reading habit, how they see the advantages and disadvantages of reading to children in their home language and in English, the stories, topics or themes of interest to them, and the benefits they experience and additional benefits they hope to experience. The KIIs also revelad enjoyment of participants, interest in available topics, preferred topics and genres and potential points of misalignment between demand and the supply of stories offered by Nal'ibali.

The focus of the KIIs was thus to gain an understanding of the programme design, implementation processes, and expected results per programme component from the perspective of the relevant stakeholders. The KIIs sought to better understand what participants would ideally like to read, how they would like to source material, their language preferences and the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the existing Nal'ibali programmes. The KIIs provided detailed contextual information to inform the findings of quantitative methodologies.

Focus groups were conducted with parents and children as important primary beneficiaries of Nal'ibali's programmes and materials. Focus groups gathered information on interest in stories, perceived challenges in the content, level/difficulty of texts, the language of texts, text/pictures, content, layout, size and format. Where focus groups intersected with areas covered by radio or supplements, questions regarding

engagement with these formats were also included. Parents and children were invited to comment on their enjoyment of the reading experience. Where possible, observations of the reading club environments were also conducted.

In-depth data collection was undertaken in Gauteng and the Eastern Cape. In the Eastern Cape, a total of three sites including both rural and urban settings were visited, while the two sites visited in Gauteng were more urban. At each site, JET sought to engage children and their parents at the ECD (ages 0-5), lower primary (ages 6-9) and upper primary (ages 10-13) levels.

Table 6 outlines the expected and actual number of respondents per province:

AN EVALUATION OF THE SUITABILITY OF THE NAL'IBALI STORY MATERIALS

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Table 6: Expected and actual KII participation by province

Province	Respondent	Key Informant Interviews		Focus Group: ECD		Focus Group: Lower Primary		Focus Group: Upper Primary		TOTAL (both Provinces)	
		Expected	Actual	Expected	Actual	Expected	Actual	Expected	Actual	Expected	Actual
Eastern Cape	Nal'ibali Provincial staff	1	1							1	1
	Reading Club Leaders	2	2[6]							2	2
	Parents			3	3	3	5	3	4	9	12
	Children			3	2	3	8[7]	3	5	9	15
Gauteng	Nal'ibali Provincial staff	1	1							1	1
	Reading Club Leaders	2	2							2	2
	Parents			3	1	3	6	3	6	9	13
	Children			3	3	3	6	3	6	9	15
Nal'ibali head office staff[8]		1	3								3

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[6] Note: One of the sites visited in the Eastern Cape was a Foundation Phase classroom that the provincial coordinator works with, therefore the teacher was interviewed as the reading club leader/literacy facilitator

[7] In both the Eastern Cape and Gauteng, more respondents than expected were included. In the Eastern Cape, the Foundation Phase HoD at the school insisted that the evaluation team could not come to the school and could only speak to three learners. This was the same with the parents in Gauten. The the team leader noted that children who were going to be part of the focus groups told their friends who also wanted to join in and asked their parents to come to the discussions as well. In both provinces, the evaluation team was also able to cover a number of sites, which also resulted in being able to speak to more learners than expected.

[8] Note that the research plan included additional engagements with head office staff through meetings, emails and additional engagements as necessary to gather data or clarify information.

The interviews, observations and focus group discussions provided large quantities of qualitative data. To maximise efficiencies, data tables were generated from interview and focus group discussion transcripts and detailed notes taken during the fieldwork activities. Data tables capture and analyse data at the same time, using inductive thematic analysis of the information collected. This process entails organising the data in meaningful chunks in a table that identifies the research event using codes tha signify which site the data is from, whether the data is from an interview (I) or a focus group (FG) and who the participants were, for example, PCI for provincial coordinator interviews, RCLI for reading club leader interviews, CFG for child focus groups and PFG for parent focus groups. The analytic codes for the meaningful chunks of data were derived from the research themes; these constituted the primary codes and research questions, which then generated secondary codes. The coded data was then used for analysis and write up.

2.5 Collocation analysis

The use of collocation as a method of analysis for the corpus provided by Nal'ibali was useful in teasing out the types of stories beneficiaries who engage with Nal'ibali material are exposed to. Collocation, as explained by Lehecka (2015, 2) refers to 'the syntagmatic attraction between two (or more) lexical items: morphemes, words, phrases or utterances'. This is based on the notion that words appear with particular other words rather than with any others and that these relationships reflect *and create* the perceptions of people. For example, one famous [9] corpus linguistics analysis focused on collocation analysis to investigate representations of migrants in the media in two countries and found these to be heavily associated with words more traditionally applied to insects and invaders – 'horde', 'swarm', etc – thus essentially de-humanising migrants in the minds of readers (Gabrielatos & Baker, 2006). Another rather famous corpus linguistics analysis, titled *'I Am Not a Feminist, But…': How Feminism Became the F-Word* (Moi, 2006) looked at representations of feminism. The argument is that in aggregate, over time, linguistic associations form impressions powerful enough to affect people's mindsets and behaviour.

Underpinning this type of analysis is that the strength of these word associations can be measured through the statistical analysis of corpus data (Lehecka, 2015). Wehrli, Seretan and Nerima, (2010, 30) also make the point that 'collocation is not defined in terms of linear proximity, but in terms of a specific grammatical relation'. It is, however, quite convenient that due to the structures of English, certain assumptions can be made about some grammatical relationships based on linear proximity – for example, descriptive adjectives will most commonly be placed in the object position, and thus be two to four words away from the subject (accounting for different word counts for different tenses, and the possible inclusion of an adverb). This is especially true of the Nal'ibali corpus due to the relative simplicity of the texts, which are targeted to children up to age 12.

Unfortunately, a full corpus analysis takes a considerable amount of time, usually a year or more, and the analysi for this evaluation was required in a little under two months. Therefore, we focused specifically on preliminary collocation analysis; in other words, we did not have the time to aggregate lemmas[10] or code parts of speech before doing the analysis, which consequently required some manual manipulation of the results. For example, 'he' and 'He' appear as two different words in the results, so they had to be added together to get a particular sum.

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[9] Famous among certain crowds, anyway.

[10] A lemma is a word as it would be presented in a dictionary. For example, 'run', 'running' and 'ran' are three variations of the lemma 'run'.

The Nal'ibali corpus analysis was done using two pieces of software. The first is a well-established 'traditional' corpus methodology software, Antconc. This software is open-source and was specifically developed for building corpora and conducting corpus linguistics analysis, and it therefore provides a number of useful features for conducting collocation analysis. Due to the short timeframes and the generally simplicity of the text, we set a five-word span on either side of the target word for each collocate to focus on. We centred the analysis on representations of family, gender and location, based on the relevance to Nal'ibali's social as well as technical skill objectives.

The second methodology employed was through Atlas.ti's Artificial Intelligence (AI) coding function. The codebook generated a large output of certain codes which were grouped into emerging themes such as family, gender and reading. The codes under the themes provided the basis for grouping certain words with their synonyms, and each word had a frequency count that enabled the formation of a hierarchy. With the hierarchy in place for all the synonyms, the process of determining which subjects are more common than others throughout the corpus became apparent and easy to highlight. Collocation itself was achieved through the codes generated, as the words around the main themes highlighted the associations or co-occurrence with particular words rather than others, such as in the instance of the word 'reading', which was more associated with library than school. To out it differently, the co-occurrence of reading and library was much higher than of reading and school.

2.6 Approach to ethics and protection of privacy

JET complies with the regulations set out by General Data Protection Regulation (or GDPR) which commenced on 25 May 2018 and South Africa's data protection law, the Protection of Personal Information (POPI) Act which was enacted in 2013 and commenced on 1 July 2020. GDPR and POPI are similar kinds of data protection laws. It is best practice to endeavour to comply with both sets of regulations; GDPR ensures that JET complies with protection of personal information as set out by the European Union, while POPI ensures that the protection of personal information is in line with South African legislation.

Informed consent was obtained from all participants for all KIIs, surveys and focus group discussions. The informed consent process included assuring participants that personal and identifying information would be confidential and that all personal identifying information would only be accessible to the evaluation team. In order to protect all parties, JET anonymises all data that contains personal information when reporting and sharing the raw data with the client. Participants were also informed that participation in the research was voluntary and that no punitive measures would be taken against learners based on their comments. Learners were asked to sign an assent form to indicate their willingness to participate in the research. Parents were asked to sign a consent form providing permission for their child to participate in the research as well as separate consent for photographs and videos. Verbal consent was obtained from all other participants.

2.7 Limitations

As with any research project, there are a number of limitations that must be noted. The limitations of the qualitative data collection included the following:

- Two of the three reading clubs visited hold their sessions outside, while one uses the garage in the home. The evaluation team was thus unable to observe the reading resources available in these reading clubs and thus also not able to comment on the state of the available resources.

- Although in both provinces more respondents were interviewed than expected, some of the expected respondents, especially parents, were not available. Thus, some of the parent focus group discussions only had one or two respondents.
- There were delays in the Gauteng data collection due to challenges in reaching and then receiving timeous responses from the provincial coordinator. These challenges were also discussed with Nal'ibali project management. Ultimately the report was delayed by two weeks.

A significant limitation to the research is that *the results are not generalisable*. There are a number of reasons for this, including:

- The methodologies employed included self-reporting, which can introduce self-selection bias (e.g., only those with strong opinions choose to respond).
- The delivery of a survey via WhatsApp may introduce response bias (e.g., some individuals were excluded from participation by, for example, lack of access to the technology, technical difficulties, poor ICT media literacy, etc).
- The qualitative research was limited to sites selected in part intentionally due to short evaluation timelines and ease of access.
- Potential introduction of the Hawthorne Effect, in which respondents give the answers they believe the research wants.
- New stories were still being added to the Nal'ibali database, as was additional information about some stories, as the research began. We took the database from a fixed point and included the stories for which links were provided; however, the stories which had not yet been added or which did not have links attached may have a very different profile.

Measures were taken to mitigate the introduction of bias. Participants were encouraged to be truthful, and protocols included anonymity, which can support more reflection in responses. Further, efforts were made to triangulate responses across different research methodologies and beneficiary types to minimise the bias effect, and there is little evidence of bias playing a role. However, some degree of bias must be acknowledged, as must the fact that the findings in this study are not necessarily representative of the general population or even of Nal'ibali beneficiaries *en masse*.

Due to the parameters of the research, which focused on language use and text in the stories, picture books were excluded. Picture stories and picture books were also excluded due to the reliance on text in the type of linguistic analysis undertaken (collocation analysis). However, children in the 0-5 age range were observed engaging with stories in the fieldwork. The research did find that younger children ignored the text in favour of making up their own stories based on the pictures (appropriate reading behaviour for that age group), so although not many of the books evaluated were found to fall into the preschool range, with only one being classified as a Grade R book, younger learners made different use of the books and possibly other picture-based resources that were not evaluated in this study.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

3 Research findings

This section presents the findings of the research undertaken. The findings are unpacked in Section 4: Discussion, Conclusions and Recommendations.

3.1 Parents' and children's perspectives on reading

Parents and children highlighted multiple benefits of reading. All children involved in the focus groups indicated that they like reading and generally enjoy the books that they read at home, at school and at the reading club. In all the sites visited, learners enjoy reading for a number of reasons, including improving their language skills, broadening their horizons, curbing boredom, helping children to unwind and learning about real-life situations.

Reading is viewed by parents as a means of enhancing language skills, instilling life lessons, strengthening the parent-child bond and improving various other skills such as drawing. Parents expressed a strong belief in the importance of reading and the positive impact it has on children's development. Parents emphasisedthat reading broadens children's imagination, fosters critical thinking and aids in learning valuable life lessons. Reading is also seen as a way to increase confidence, enhance public speaking skills and improve children's ability to engage in necessary conversations. The ability to read is also linked to acquiring knowledge and understanding signs and information in various contexts. Parents also noted that reading can relieve stress and provide a break from academic routines. The act of being read to by older siblings or adults opens up children's minds and helps them visualise and understand the content better. This engagement with reading is seen as a result of programs like Nal'ibali, which sparks interest and curiosity in children's minds. Parents considered reading a gateway to engaging conversations with their children. After reading, parents may discuss the content with their children, using the stories as a basis for practical examples and real-life lessons. This approach facilitates meaningful conversations and helps children relate stories to their own experiences.

When information is shared through reading and storytelling, children become more engaged and ask questions, leading to a deeper understanding of the topic. Reading is seen as a tool for effective communication between parents and children, aiding in better understanding and mutual growth.

Below are some quotes from children about why they like reading.

Ngoba incwadi esizifundayo, mhlawumbi ezinye zinezinto ezenzeka apha emhlabeni. Sizazi nathi izinto eziyingozi nezingezo ngozi. Sizazi singazenzi kanti, zi wrongo ezazinto. (Because the books that we read, maybe some of them have things that happen here. So that we know what things are dangerous and not dangerous so that we know we should not do those things because they are dangerous.) - Site3CFG0609

What I really like about reading is that there is an Afrikaans reading book. So I want to learn Afrikaans and pronounce well. And I want to buy myself in Afrikaans book and go back to my coloured school and learn Afrikaans again. - Site5CFG1012

Ndithanda ukufunda mna, amagama afundisa kamnandi. Mhlawumbi incadi is exciting. Uyabona then, xandiyifundayo ndiyifunde kamnandi. Mhlawumbi, iyakwenzeka kwezindawo silapha kuzo, mhlawumbi apha eMonti. Mhlawumbi iyenzeka apha e Eastern Cape, and ndi like lonto kengoku. (I like reading. I enjoy words as they teach you nicely. Maybe a book is exciting. You see then when I read it, I enjoy it. Maybe, it will happen in this places that we are in, maybe here in East London, maybe it will happen here in the Eastern Cape and I like that.) - Site3CFG0609

Ka go bala ke rata nto tsengata. Go bala go etsa motho oye holo because sometimes ka go bala fela okaba journalist. Sometimes gona mantsoe osawatsebeng obatla ho watseba. Ha obala bosakgona ho bitsa hantle. Hasobala otlo gona go bitsa hantle (I like a lot of things about reading. Reading makes a person go far because from just reading you could become a journalist. Sometimes there are words that you don't know that you want to know. When you read you can learn to pronounce words well.) - Site5CFG1012

Ndithanda ukuba inika imfundiso. Into eyenzekileyo, uyayifunda uyifake engqondweni. (I like that it teaches you. Whatever happens, you read it and keep it in your mind.) - Site3CFG1012

Ha.a ndithi ndithanda uba ndingakhe ndikhikhe eskolweni, ndimane ndisithi nguban'eligama. (No I like that I don't 'kick' and keep asking what this word is when I am at school) - Site2CFG0609

3.2 What would Nal'ibali's target audience like to read?

3.2.1 Genre and content

For younger children aged 0-5, their interests lie in picture stories that capture their imagination and curiosity. Their preferences lean heavily toward visual content and characters, showcasing their fascination with illustrations and characters like 'Elmo' from Takalani Sesame.

Children in the 6-9 age-group from the different sites exhibited an enthusiasm for reading stories. At home, they gravitate towards engaging narratives such as 'Usuku luka bhuti mvundla', 'Umhlobo ka Asanda', 'The tale of floating Zimkhitha', 'UZinzi uphi ngoku?', 'Jabu', 'Yolisa', and 'Lizo and Liziwe'. The children are drawn to stories that are humorous, engaging and relatable. At school, their favourite stories include 'Sibabalwe usesibhedlele', 'Inenekazi lodumo', 'Umhlobo ka Asanda', 'The Dog and the Jakkal', 'Dusty and Daisy', and "Mama Mabhena'. They enjoy stories in English and isiXhosa, appealing to their cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The children not only enjoy reading but actively engage in retelling the stories to others, demonstrating a deep connection with the content.

In the 10-12 age-group, children displayed a growing appreciation for stories that offer both entertainment and meaningful messages. They read tories in their schoolbooks and Nal'ibali stories at home. They read a mix of English stories and stories in the local languages. Notable titles include 'uSuku luka bhuti Mvundla oludikayo', 'uDadana ombi', 'Why the birds fly at night', 'Sibabalwe usesibhedlela', 'Lulu', 'Lazy Helena', and 'Gustine the Giant'. These stories captivate them due to their relatable themes, lessons and engaging content.

Children not only enjoy reading but also draw valuable life lessons from these stories, reflecting their depth of engagement.

Overall, children's reading preferences are rooted in relatable content, engaging narratives and the opportunity to learn from the stories they encounter. Whether through humour, relatable characters or meaningful lessons, these preferences emphasise the importance of providing diverse and accessible reading materials that cater to children's evolving interests and needs.

Table 7 below outlines the reading preferences of focus group participants by age-group and location. The results demonstrate that all children across all sites enjoy reading stories. Most children enjoy reading funny stories, although fewer of the older children in Gauteng seem to enjoy these. Overall, most children across sites and age groups also enjoy animal stories, fantasy stories and stories about real-life. Traditional tales appear to be more popular with more children in the Eastern Cape, with fewer learners in the different sites across Gauteng indicating that they enjoy these stories.

Table 7: Learners' preferred story categories

Site	Age Group	Enjoy Reading Stories	Animals	Funny Stories	Fantasy	Traditional Tales	Real-Life Stories
Eastern Cape - Site 3	6 - 9 (n = 5)	All	All	All	Girls (n = 3/60%)	All	3 (60%)
Eastern Cape - Site 2	6 - 9 (n = 3)	All	All	All	All	All	All
Eastern Cape - Site 3	10 - 12 (n = 2)	All	All	All	All	1 (50%)	All
Eastern Cape - Site 2	10 - 12 (n = 3)	All	2 (67%)	All	All	All	All
Gauteng - Site 5	6 - 9 (n = 6)	All	4 (67%)	All	2 (33%)	5 (83%)	4 (67%)
Gauteng - Site 5	10 - 12 (n = 3)	All	2 (67%)	2 (67%)	All	0	All
Gauteng - Site 4	10 - 12 (n = 3)	All	0	1 (33%)	1 (33%)	2 (67%)	1 (33%)

Table 8 presents the respondents' preferences regarding the types of stories they like to read to children. Respondents were able to select multiple options. Among the choices, animal stories are the most favoured, with 225 responses, accounting for 22.5% of the total sample. Funny stories are also highly preferred, with 153 responses (15.3%). Stories with life lessons are another popular choice, selected by 162 respondents (16.2%). Other types of stories that received notable mentions include fantasy (9.3%), feel-good (9.4%), and real-life (7.0%) stories. Traditional tales and religious stories received relatively equal responses, with 58 each (5.8%). Poetry, contemporary stories, newspaper stories were selected by the lowest numbers of respondents.

Table 8: Responses to WhatsApp survey question 4: What are the top three types of stories you like to read to children?

Responses	Obs	Percent
Animal stories	225	22.5%
Fantasy	93	9.3%

Poetry	39	3.9%
Funny	153	15.3%
Contemporary	14	1.4%
Real-life	70	7.0%
Stories with life lessons	162	16.2%
Feel-good	94	9.4%
Traditional tales	58	5.8%
Religious	58	5.8%
Newspaper stories	32	3.2%
Total	998	100.0%

Table 9 depicts participants' preferred genres, in order of choice. Among the 1st choice preferences, animal stories are the most favoured, with 225 respondents selecting them as their top choice. Fantasy stories received 33 selections as the 1st choice, followed by funny stories with 22 selections. Other 1st choice preferences include feel-good stories (29), poetry (4), real-life stories (3), stories with life lessons (4), religious stories (5) and newspaper stories (6). Traditional tales were not selected by any respondents as the 1st choice.

Table 9: Participants' preferred genres, in order of choice

Genre	1st choice	2nd choice	3rd choice
Animal stories	225	0	0
Fantasy	33	60	0
Poetry	4	23	13
Funny	22	91	40
Contemporary	13	1	0
Real-life	3	34	33
Stories with life lessons	4	26	132
Feel-good	29	57	8
Traditional tales	0	2	56
Religious	5	26	27
Newspaper stories	6	12	14
Total	344	332	323

Interestingly, the responses of the WhatsApp Survey differed from the findings of the NRB, shown in the figure below. Participants in the NRB were also asked about the reading materials they kept at home, such as books for young children, fiction books for adults, religious books, magazines, textbooks, cookbooks, dictionaries, and more. Notably, respondents showed a high interest in religious books or pamphlets (with 52% of all respondents indicating that they kept these in their home), while newspapers (41%), textbooks (39%) and fiction books (31%) were also popular. Fewer respondents had non-fiction (18%) and poetry books (15%). When asked about the frequency with which respondents read different materials, the most read

printed text was religious materials (45% of all responses indicated that they did so frequently). Respondents indicated that they regularly read magazines (24%) and printed fiction books (19%). Interestingly, respondents indicated they did not regularly read online fiction or non-fiction at all, but frequently read online religious materials (28%), online news (36%) and social media (52%). Despite frequent online media use, digital materials like e-books were unpopular among respondents, with only 26% of all respondents owning any e-books at all. The low interest shown in digital books despite high digital activity is echoed by the finding that only 39% of respondents indicated reading for enjoyment on a cell-phone. This suggests that adult readers value printed literature when reading for themselves, and prefer to do their reading away from screens when not reading news or social media.
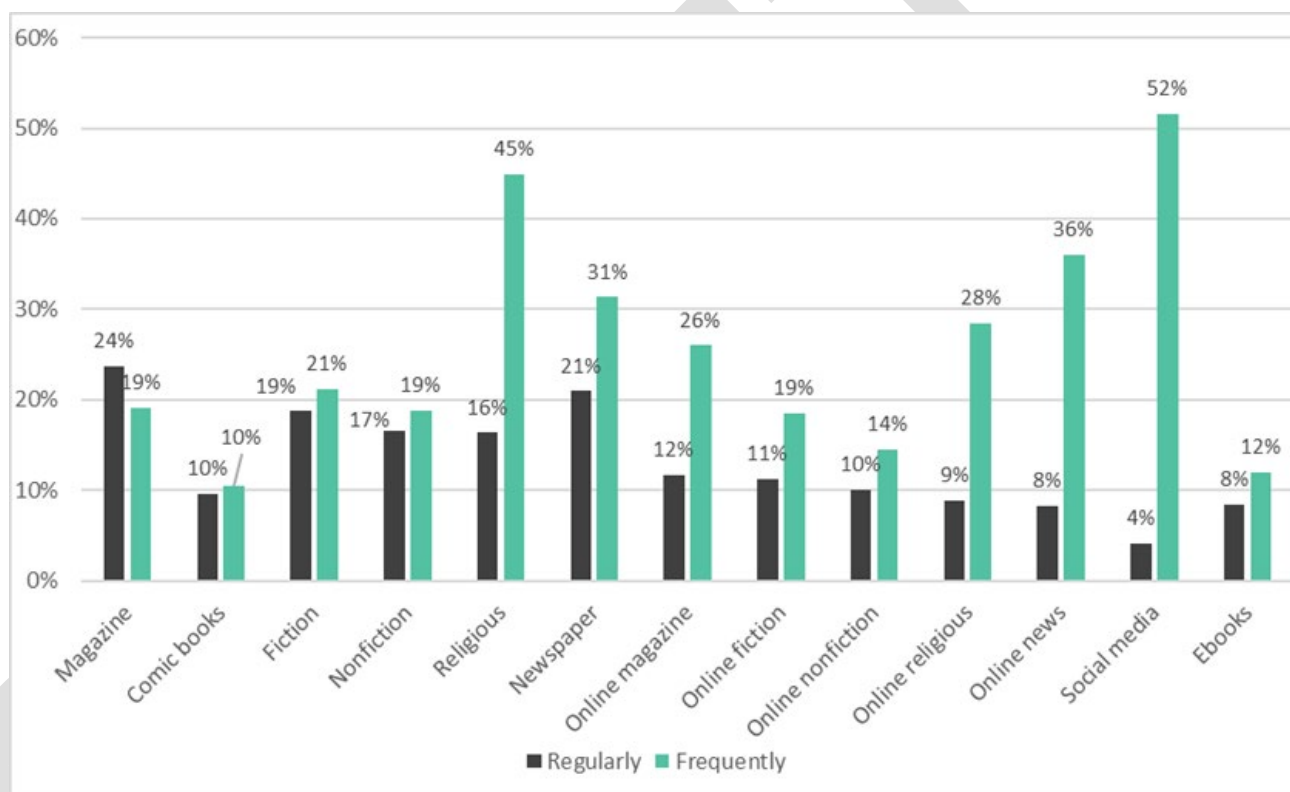
Figure 2: NRB question A29: How often do you read each of the following? NRB survey (multiple responses allowed)

Other findings of note from the NRB include that 60% of the participants own books authored by South Africans, reflecting a considerable interest in locally produced literature. Encouragingly, this suggests a positive reception to local storytelling and underscores the significance of promoting and supporting South African authors to further nurture a reading culture that reflects the nation's unique perspectives and narratives.

3.2.2 Summary

To summarise, younger children show a strong interest in picture stories that stimulate their imagination. Older children also show a keen interest in reading stories, with 6-9-year-old children being particularly drawn to stories that are humorous, engaging and relatable, while children aged 10-12 appreciate stories

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that provide both entertainment and meaningful messages. Children not only enjoy reading, but actively retell the stories, demonstrating a strong connection with the content.

The WhatsApp survey revealed that books from libraries and bookstores are commonly read, while websites and website content, newspapers and magazines also seem to be relatively commonly used. Fewer respondents indicated that they read Nal'ibali stories/supplements. On the other hand, respondents in the NRB indicated a preference for religious stories. In both the WhatsApp survey and NRB, parents indicated reading both fiction and non-fiction stories to their children, blending creative and informative content.

In terms of genre preferences, animal stories emerged as a favourite, followed by funny stories and stories with life lessons. These genres resonate across age groups, showcasing children's appreciation for engaging narratives that combine entertainment and learning. The qualitative data also emphasised children's affinity for stories that enhance language skills, broaden horizons and provide relatable content. From picture stories for younger children to more complex narratives for older readers, the stories foster imagination, critical thinking and valuable life lessons. This highlights the importance of providing diverse reading materials that cater to children's varying interests.

Parents recognise the numerous benefits of reading for their children, including language enhancement, bonding, stress relief and skill development. Reading is seen as a tool for sparking curiosity, engaging conversations and providing a break from routine. The National Reading Barometer highlighted the popularity of religious books, newspapers and textbooks among adults, reflecting a blend of digital and print preferences. A strong interest in local literature underscores the significance of supporting South African authors.

3.3   Where would Nal'ibali beneficiaries like to source the materials?

This section focuses on access to materials and the preferences adults and Nal'ibali beneficiaries for sourcing reading material, particularly for children.

3.3.1   The purchase of books

To better understand the preferred sources of reading materials for the Nal'ibali audience, the evaluation examined NRB questions which asked adults where they typically buy or source books, their preferences for engaging with community libraries and engagement with libraries of the children they live with.

The NRB findings suggest that the respondents are willing to source materials from a broad range of locations. Participants predominantly sought books from stationery stores (30% usually and 14% prefer), supermarkets (18% usually and 9% prefer) and specialised bookshops selling new books (9% usually and 11% prefer). While borrowing books from libraries was a popular option, the preference for owning books remained significant. Notably, 22% of respndents preferred accessing free printed reading material from a library, while 17% favoured the post office. Additionally, 12% preferred obtaining such materials from schools.

Among NRB respondents, 45% reported never buying books, indicating potential barriers to book ownership. Notably, less than 40% of respondents indicated a willingness to spend R100 or more on a book as can be seen in Figure 3 below, 30% of participants preferred both new and second-hand books, 14% opted exclusively for second-hand books, and only 10% exclusively for new books.
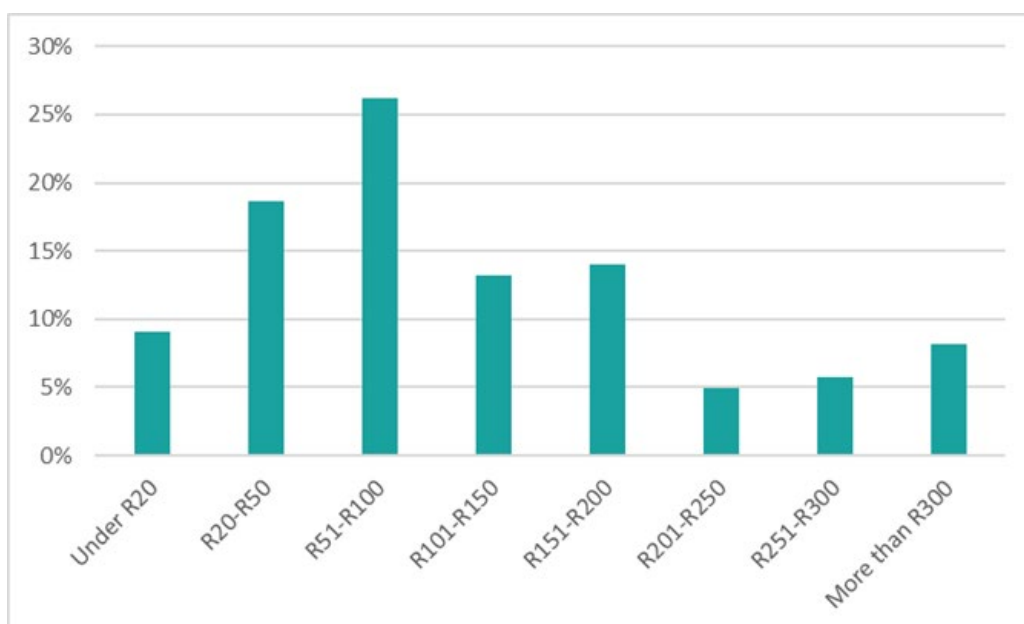
Figure 3: NRB question A24: How much would you be willing to pay for a book?

The research undertaken with Nal'ibali beneficiaries also found that generally parents do not buy books. For many of the parents, the challenge is related to financial constraints as many parents do not have stable jobs, as confirmed by parents and reading club leaders in all areas. Other parents prefer downloading online books. In the Eastern Cape in Site 3, parents were in agreement that the internet is a useful resource for downloading books. The parents said that they do not spend any money on books but that they do download online books when they have data. Parents noted that downloading online books is quicker because they use their phones regularly. As one parent explained:

> *Sometimes I feel like it is much quicker, cause soloko sise zifownini. Mhlawumbi ndithi ndiyathanda ufunda mhlawumbi, like I want to be updated on the top stories, isefownini mos yonke lanto. (It is much easier. Sometimes I feel like it is much quicker, cause we are always on the phone. Maybe let's say I like reading maybe, like I want to be updated on the top stories, all of that is on the phone. It is much easier.) - Site3PFG*

Parents also believe that it is more cost effective to download books, as explained by this parent:

> *I think it costs. When you order incwadi mos online kufuneka ubhatele I price yayo, ubhatele ubhatele for courier uyabona? So xa une data, you can easily download efownini. (I think it costs. When you order a book online you must pay its price and pay for the courier you see? So when you have data, you can easily download on your phone.) - Site3PFG*

For some parents, buying books for their children is something that they had not considered previously. One parent mentioned that they while they don't mind reading on the phone, they don't think they would mind spending money on books for their child. Another parent indicated that they do not buy books because their child is part of a Nal'ibali reading club and gets books their. Their child was not interested in reading before joining Nal'ibali but now that they are part of the reading club, the parent would consider buying the child books.

Mna ke owam before ebeqala ungena apha, ebengathandi kakade ukufunda. So, bendinge nawo lamdla noba ndiyayibona nantsiya ikhona kwi ndawo yencwadi, incwadi ndiqonde uba inomdla lencwadi yeyomtwana okule age yakhe, because of esonqena ukufunda. But ke ngoku noku ngabinayo imali ibiyenye yezinto ke. But kengoku kuba amaxesha engafani ke ngoku noko kumane kubakho noba int'inye kumane ku tyhileka ku tyhileka. Ndinga zama ukumthengela ngaphandle kwezi zalapha iincwadi. Kubekho iincwadi esizithenga ngapho ema town, akwazi ukufunda. (With my child before they joined here they did not like reading. So I did not have that interest even if I saw a book somewhere that was appropriate for their age, because they are lazy to read. But also not having money was one of the things. But now because times are different I can try and buy him in addition to the ones he gets from here. There can be some books that we buy from town so that he is able to read them.) – Site2PFG1012

Generally, children would like to receive books as gifts but not necessarily for Christmas or their birthdays because they felt that books should be a separate gift not linked to those special days.

3.3.2 Materials and resources at Nal'ibali focus group sites

The findings of the qualitative research indicate that Nal'ibali's resources are widely utilised, with some differences in the languages predominantly used and the methods of material delivery. For instance, in the Eastern Cape, Site 1, an ECD Centre, offers Nal'ibali's materials in isiXhosa and English, along with additional supplements and posters. At Site 2, isiXhosa is emphasised due to the children's language background and local schools' language of instruction. This site uses Nal'ibali materials, audio resources and its own books. Site 3, being a school, leverages isiXhosa as the home language of students, with a mix of government-provided resources and Nal'ibali materials available. Reading clubs play a pivotal role across sites, offering children a space to engage with stories, in activities and in discussions. Site 4 and Site 5 share a preference for isiZulu and Sesotho materials, with Nal'ibali resources, audio stories and local libraries serving as valuable sources.

Figure 4: Story area, Province, ECD Site 5

Most of the sites visited for the evaluation were Nal'ibali SEF-based sites. Sincde they receive direct delivery of Nali'bali matgerials, they do not experience many challenges in this regard. Nal'ibali partners can also access the supplement via their local post office, although Nal'ibali beneficiaries highlighted challenges experienced with the post offices in general across the provinces. Additionally, libraries are far from where people live or are dysfunctional. Some partners can also sign up for direct delivery; however, this method is costly and thus unsustainable in the long term. Provincial coordinators play a large role in delivering Nal'ibali materials to areas where the post office or courier service is not accessible or available. One reading club leader mentioned that once in a while the provincial coordinator may be late delivering their supplements, which then has an effect on the running of the reading club. With the local post office being closed, they have to go to another location to access the materials. However, this is not a regular occurrence and is understandable given the responsibilities of the provincial coordinators. Lastly, people are also encouraged to visit the website to access materials. There is also a WhatsApp group which uses a chatbot where people can gain access to stories.

The WhatsApp survey distributed to Nal'ibali recipients also investigated access questions. Table 10 displays the various sources of stories that WhatsApp survey respondents usually read to children (multiple responses possible). The most commonly mentioned medium was books from libraries, with 219 responses, accounting for 28.4% of the total sample. Books from bookstores were also frequently read, with 144 responses (18.7%). Websites or website content was another popular choice, with 136 responses (17.6%). Newspapers and

magazines were mentioned by 138 (17.9%) respondents and 123 (15.9%) respondents, respectively. Nal'ibali stories/supplements, though specifically mentioned in the question, received fewer responses – only 11 (1.4%)[11]. Finally, a minimal number of respondents mentioned reading textbooks, with only one response (0.1%).

Table 10: Response to WhatsApp survey Question 3: What else do you usually read to children?

Responses	Obs	Percent
Websites or website content	136	17.6%
Nal'ibali stories/supplements	11	1.4%
Books (from libraries)	219	28.4%
Books (from bookstores)	144	18.7%
Newspapers	138	17.9%
Magazines	123	15.9%
Textbook	1	0.1%
Total	772	100.0%

In comparison, the findings from the NRB about what respondents read to children are illustred below.
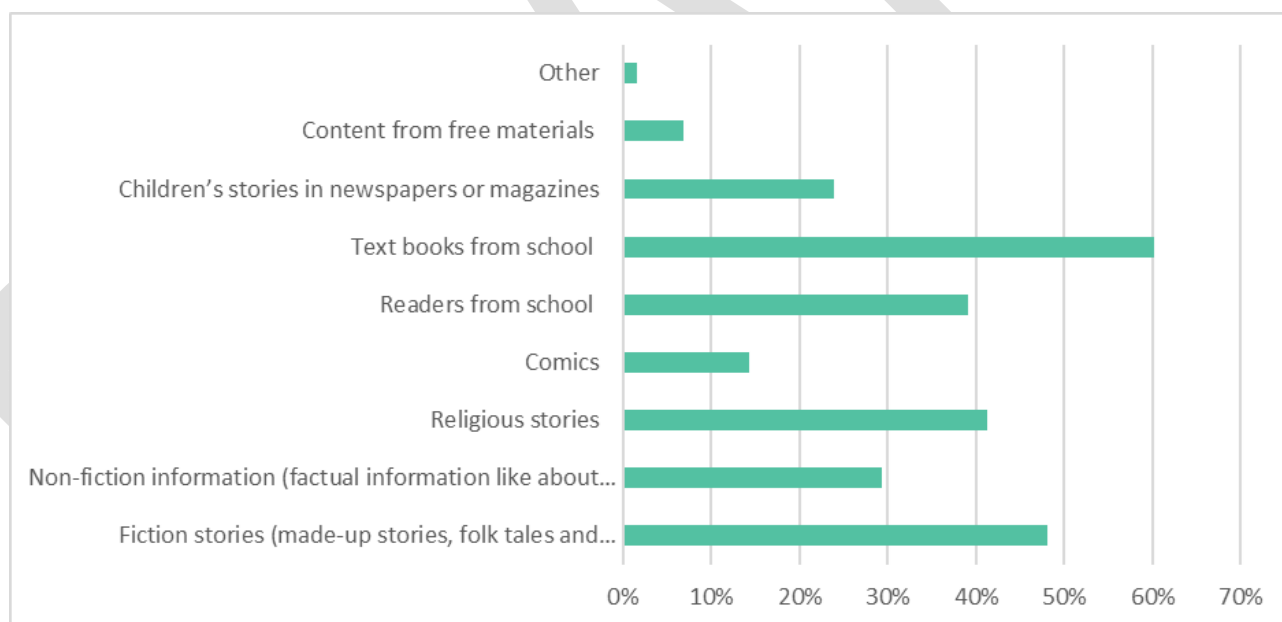
Figure 5: NRB question A45: What do you usually read to children? (multiple responses allowed

In addition, the research explored whether WhatsApp is a preferred method of accessing stories. The responses are depicted in the table that follows, which shows that the majority of respondents, 311,

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[11] Note that this finding cannot be given particular weight. Participants in this case are likely excluding WhatsApp stories based on the previous question and the use of 'other'. This implies that relatively few individuals access stories through WhatsApp and other Nal'ibali channels. It is also possible that some participants may have interpreted this to mean 'all Nal'ibali materials' and so did not respond with this option, even if they do read supplements or other Nal'ibali materials.

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indicated that they do like to receive stories via WhatsApp, accounting for 90.4% of the total sample. A small percentage of respondents, 4.9%, indicated that they do not like receiving stories via WhatsApp. Additionally, 16 respondents (4.7%) were unsure about their preference.

Table 11: Responses to Question 1: Do you like to get stories via WhatsApp?

Response	Obs	Percent
Yes	311	90.4%
No	17	4.9%
Not sure	16	4.7%
Total	344	100.0%

Table 8 illustrates the frequency with which WhatsApp survey respondents receive Nal'ibali reading resources from WhatsApp. It reveals that a small portion of respondents, 8.4%, receive these resources on a daily basis, with 29 observations. A larger percentage, 20.1%, indicated that they receive Nal'ibali reading resources weekly, accounting for 69 observations. Furthermore, 26.2% of respondents reported receiving these resources on a monthly basis, with 90 observations. The majority of respondents, constituting 45.4% of the sample, receive Nal'ibali reading resources less than once a month, which corresponds to 156 respondents.

Table 12: Responses to WhatsApp survey Question 2: How often do you get Nal'ibali reading resources from WhatsApp?

Responses	Obs	Percent
Daily	29	8.4%
Weekly	69	20.1%
Monthly	90	26.2%
Less than once a month	156	45.4%
Total	344	100.0%

3.3.3 Reading clubs as spaces for children

Reading clubs are one of the main sources from which children can access stories. Children who belong to reading clubs attend reading club sessions regularly, except for when they clash with extra-mural school activities such as netball and soccer. Children attend reading club sessions because they enjoy reading, they enjoy learning and they enjoy other reading club activities, which often include singing, acting and general discussions about life. Some children also indicated that reading clubs are safe spaces for them to express themselves.

In the Eastern Cape, among the three 6-9-year-olds in the reading club, one child joined because their parent is leading the reading club, the other joined because they heard that the reading club would be going to Baby Swag, a place with swings and cars where children can play, while the last child participated through home visits. What these children enjoy most about the reading club are the stories, especially when they get to act them out. The older children in the reading club said that they joined because they wanted to improve their language skills and learn how to read so that they could improve in their studies. More specifically, one child being in the reading club helped with improving their English.

I reading club into endiyithanda ngayo. If amagama asiwazi, u (redacted) uyasisikela mhlawumbi, asinike iincwadi. Kemnake nda choose eye English because i English ndiyakholwa kuyi funda. And i English ndandinga yazi, ngoku ndiyayazi. That's why i English ndiyifunda everyday and ndiyithetha everyday. And if ndifika ekhaya late evening, okanye morning. Ndiyayithetha. (What I like about the reading club is that if we don't know certain words then the reading club leader cuts books for us. I choose an English book because I like English. And I didn't know English before, but now I know it. That's why I read English everyday and I speak it every day. And if I get home late in the evening or morning, I speak it.) Site2CFG1012

In this reading club, children also confirmed that they could borrow books from the reading club to take home. The children also mentioned that they play different games and sport, write, listen to stories and traditional tales that make them laugh, and that they eat and are free at the reading club. One also mentioned that they learn manners.

In Gauteng, all the younger children in the reading club indicated that they enjoy the activities that they do at the reading club – learning to read, singing, playing, doing projects, drawing and putting on shows on the things they have read. At Site 4, among the older children, all the three indicated that the reading club teaches them how to read and prepares them for reading in their respective classrooms in their schools. The children reported that they like the activities they engage in at the reading club. All three mentioned reading specifically, while one added liking playing and the other mentioned that she likes writing at the reading club. Two children indicated that they like the kind of treatment they get at the reading club, for example, they they aer able to get help when confused about something and they are not shouted but corrected when they have done something wrong. Two of the older learners at Site 5 joined the reading club to improve their skills. The third learner joined because they saw other learners having fun; at some point they stopped attending reading club sessions and found their marks began dropping and so went back to the reading club. The learners mentioned that they do a number of activities in the reading club. The do 'warm-ups' and they sing. Additionally, when there are certain special holidays like Valentine's Day or Youth Day, for example, they do activities linked to those occasions. When asked what they most like about their reading club, all the learners mentioned feeling comfortable in the reading club.

Into engiyithandayo kwi reading club is that (redacted) uyakwazi uku communicate-a nabantwana. Akabashayi. Even if ukhuluma ianswer ewrong abakuhleki, they correct you, the next time uyazi. Into engiyithandayo ngereading club ukuthi futhi wonke umuntu unamaright wakhe. Yeah you can do anything but with respect (What I like about the reading club is that the reading club leader can communicate with children. She does not hit them. Even if you answer something incorrectly they don't laugh at you, they correct you, the next time you know it. Another thing I like about the reading club is that everyone has rights. Yeah you can do anything but with respect) – Site5CFG1012

I like that. When mam [RC leader] teaches sometimes I can make jokes to make myself feel proud that I'm here - Site5CFG1012

3.3.4 **Summary**

In summary, most WhatsApp survey most respondents indicated that they like receiving stories on WhatsApp, with 90.4% of respondents indicating this. When asked about the use of resources from WhatsApp, most respondents indicated that they only access WhatsApp resources less than once a month, followed by those who access resources monthly, then weekly, with daily access representing the lowest proportion of respondents. In the NRB, frequent reading included religious materials (45%), magazines (24%) and printed fiction books (19%). Although online fiction resources were less favoured, respondents also frequently read online news (36%) and online religious materials (28%).

The qualitative data revealed diverse approaches to sourcing materials, with Nal'ibali being the main source for most reading clubs. Respondents also mentioned the use of local libraries, school resources and their own personal reading materials. Reading clubs are a significant channel for children to access stories, with the reading club sessions being highlighted as safe spaces where children enjoy not only reading but also various activities, fostering a love for literature and learning. The emphasis on local languages and the blending of Nal'ibali materials with other resources underscores the importance of culturally relevant content. The findings also indicate that provincial coordinators play a key role in delivering materials to areas with limited access. The NRB highlighted the importance of printed materials, with respondents indicating a willingness to purchase both new and second-hand books, while also expressing interest in borrowing from libraries. Preference for accessing content from free printed materials accessed through libraries, post offices or schools was less popular among NRB respondents. Furthermore, the WhatsApp survey's findings point to the need for easily accessible libraries and options for receiving free printed reading materials, highlighting the multifaceted nature of the audience's reading habits.

3.4 What are the language preferences of Nal'ibali beneficiaries?

The NRB gives a glimpse of national preferences regarding the language of reading material. Of the total sample of NRB respondents, the majority reported they speak isiZulu at home regularly (19%), followed by isiXhosa, English (both 15%) and Afrikaans (12%). isiNdebele (1%), Tshivenda (1%) and Xitsonga (2%) were the least spoken languages. However, English emerged as the preferred language to read in for enjoyment (57%), followed by Afrikaans (7%), isiXhosa (6%) and isiZulu (7%). When reading for information or to learn, there was an even stronger preference for English, as 72% of respondents said it was the language they most often learned in, with 83% stating that it was their preference. This broad preference for English does not crowd out a demand for reading in other languages, however. Though 90% of respondents indicated having books at home in English, 17% had books in Afrikaans, and 30% had books in isiZulu and isiXhosa collectively. Less spoken languages were also demanded less frequently, demonstrated by the case of Setswana, which was only reported to be the preferred language of 12% of respondents, but with 11% of respondents reporting having Setswana books in their homes. When asked about reading with children, the same patterns of language preferences emerged. English emerged as the most frequently used language (83%), followed by isiZulu (18%) and Afrikaans (15%).

These findings indicate that South Africans mostly speak and read in more than one language. This is coupled with a desire to read in English predominantly as a shared tongue, while also reading for enjoyment and with children in their home language. Nal'ibali's offering of materials in all South African languages is encouraging, and should continue to be supported to meet the preference for diverse materials.
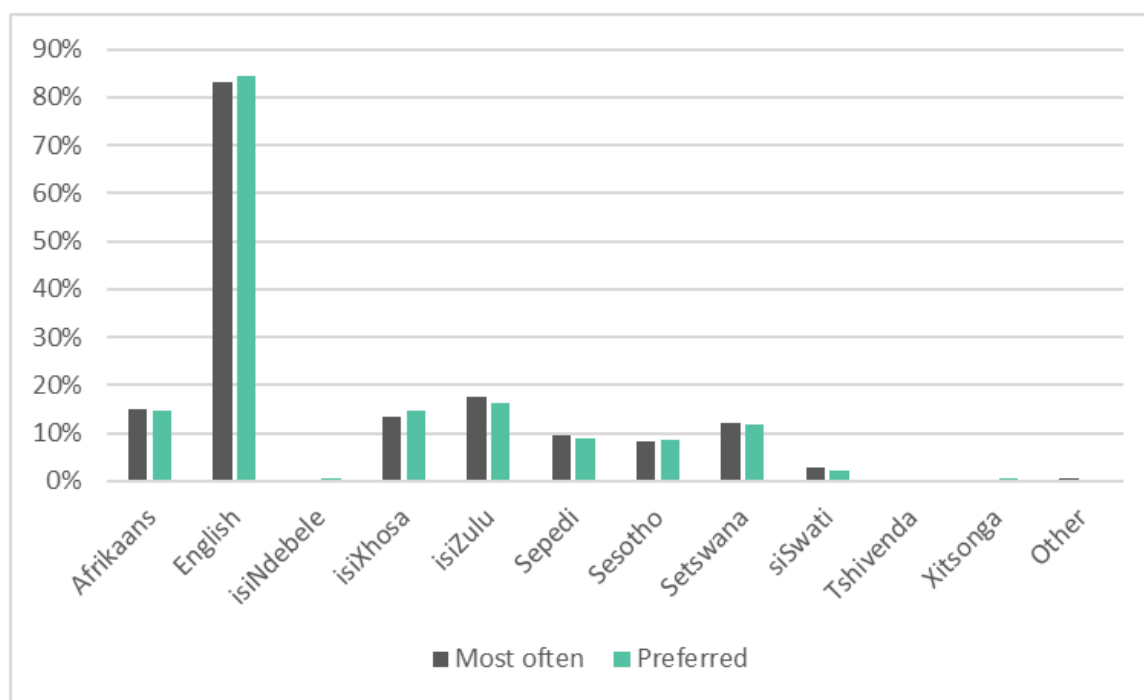
Figure 6: NRB question A30_2: When reading with children, what languages do you MOST OFTEN read in? & NRB question A30_3: When reading with children, what language do you MOST PREFER to read in? (multiple responses allowed)

In terms of existing Nal'ibali beneficiaries, WhatsApp survey respondents were asked to select all languages that they like to read in. Responses are portrayed in the figure that follows. The darker band indicates the percent of WhatsApp survey respondents indicating a preference for that language, the lighter band the approximate percent of South Africans speaking each language as a first language[12]. Among the language preferences, English was the most favoured choice for reading materials, with 312 respondents (44.6%) confirming this. isiZulu was the second most popular choice, selected by 89 respondents (12.7%). Other commonly selected languages were Afrikaans (58), isiXhosa (63), Sepedi (50), Sesotho (43), Setswana (39) and Xitsonga (13). As with NRB respondents, English is the most preferred language. However, WhatsApp survey participants were more likely to select minority languages than the NRB respondents.

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[12] See https://southafrica-info.com/arts-culture/11-languages-south-africa. Note also that the WhatsApp survey sample was not intended to be nationally representative. However, the relatively close approximations between survey respondents and the percent of language speakers in the population indicates that the Nal'ibali network covers all languages, but with implied under-representation in isiZulu, isiXhosa and Afrikaans groups. This may be due to self-selection bias (e.g., isiZulu/isiXhosa/Afrikaans speakers were less likely to respond) or because they are underrepresented in the Nal'ibali database.

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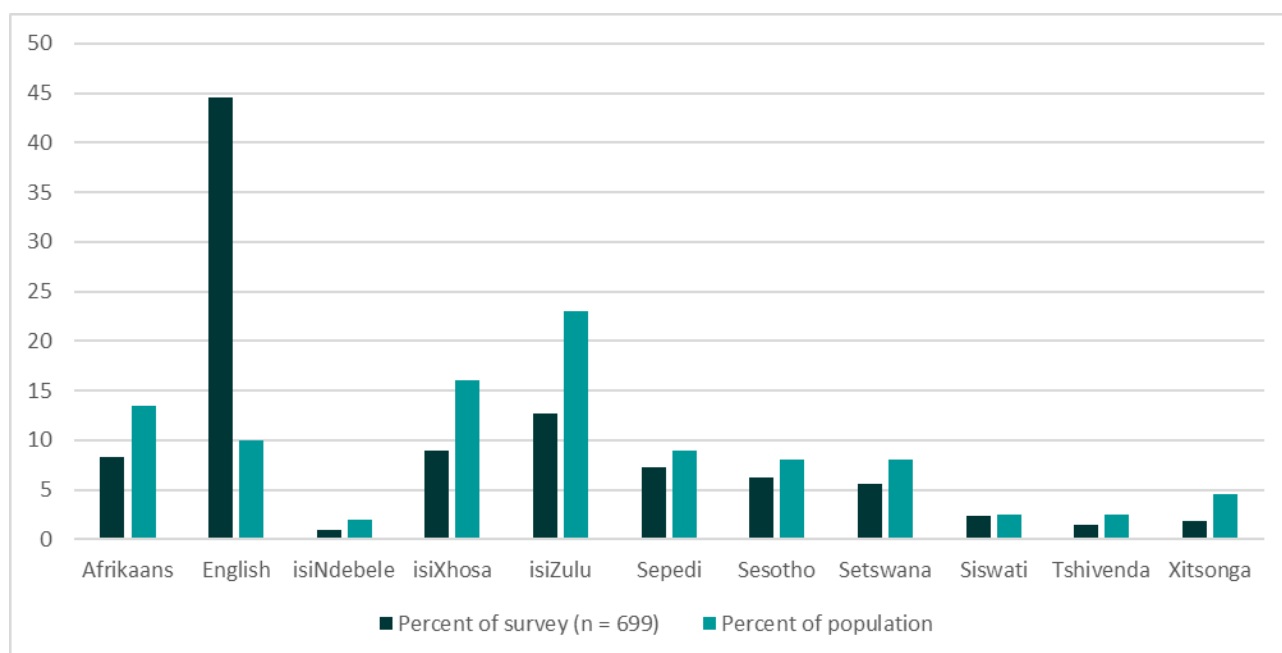
Figure 7: Responses to WhatsApp survey Question 5: What languages do you like to read in?, and percent of language speakers in the South African population

Table 13 breaks down the chosen languages by the order in which they were listed by respondents. Most (259) respondents selected English as their first choice, with Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Setswana, and Sepedi mostly selected as 3rd and 4th choices. Afrikaans and isiZulu were the next most frequently listed 1st and 2nd choices respectively.

Table 13: Ranked choice preferences for language

Language	1st choice	2nd choice	3rd choice	4th choice	5th choice
Afrikaans	58	0	0	0	0
English	259	53	0	0	0
isiNdebele	1	4	1	0	0
isiXhosa	8	42	13	0	0
isiZulu	6	46	26	9	2
Sepedi	4	43	2	1	0
Sesotho	1	28	11	2	1
Setswana	3	28	7	1	0
Siswati	3	12	1	0	0
Tshivenda	1	4	4	1	0
Xitsonga	0	7	5	1	0
Total	344	267	70	15	3

3.4.1 Languages in reading clubs

Across the various sites and age groups, children's reading experiences are shaped by a blend of languages and genres. In both the Eastern Cape and Gauteng, children in the focus groups enjoy a combination of books in isiXhosa, isiZulu, Sesotho and English. They thus appreciate stories from different linguistic backgrounds, and their enjoyment is evident whether reading at home, school, or within reading club activities. Children's ability to retell stories highlights their deep engagement with the content, suggesting that the stories resonate beyond the reading experience itself.

The materials available in reading clubs are mainly in the local languages, such as isiXhosa in the Eastern Cape and isiZulu and Sesotho in Gauteng, with English materials serving as supplementary resources. The language choice reflects the children's home languages and the language of learning and teaching (LOLT) in local schools.

The reading club leaders in these regions are sensitive to language preferences based on the children's home languages and school curricula. In the Eastern Cape, isiXhosa resources are predominantly used due to alignment with the children's language background sand the local schools' use of isiXhosa as the LOLT. In Gauteng, the reading clubs align with the predominant languages in the areas, isiZulu and Sesotho.

Across different sites, there is an acknowledgment of the importance of proficiency in both home language and English. The challenges of exclusive language reliance are evident. Parents and reading club leaders stress that being limited to one language can hinder comprehension and learning as children progress through school. Reading in one's home language fosters a foundation for learning other languages, particularly English, which is often required for academic success and future job prospects. Parents and reading club leaders agree that learning to read in both one's home language and in English offers various advantages, including improved vocabulary, understanding of subjects and enhanced career opportunities. While home languages provide a strong foundation, English proficiency is viewed as necessary as it holds global importance and is beneficial for higher education and employment. Bilingual stories are valued as a bridge between languages, aiding understanding and promoting multilingualism. Bilingual stories play a role in addressing language needs. They help children understand stories in their vernacular while also enhancing their vocabulary and comprehension in English. This approach is seen as beneficial for academic and real-world contexts.

3.4.2 Summary

To summarise, the WhatsApp survey highlighted English as the most favoured language for reading (44.6%), followed by isiZulu (12.7%). The ranked choice analysis indicates that many respondents prefer English as their first choice while regional languages like isiXhosa and isiZulu were frequently chosen as second and third options. The qualitative data emphasises the importance of multilingualism in reading experiences, with children engaging with stories in their home languages and appreciating materials that bridge languages. Reading club materials align with local languages, reflecting both home languages and the LOLT in schools. The desire for proficiency in both home languages and English emerged as significant, as parents and reading club leaders stressed the foundational role of home languages and the practical benefits of English proficiency for academic and career success. Bilingual stories were identified as valuable tools for bridging languages and promoting comprehension. The NRB further supported these insights, showcasing a broad preference for reading in English, while recognising the demand for diverse materials in different languages. Overall, the findings emphasise the importance of offering materials in multiple languages to cater to the audience's varied preferences and needs, fostering a love for reading across linguistic boundaries.

3.5 What is the profile of Nal'ibali's existing story repository in terms of length, themes, and language complexity?

3.5.1 Length and language

To answer this question, an evaluation of the existing Nal'ibali database was undertaken, based on the entirety of the available repository at the time of the evaluation. A total of 214 stories were included in the analysis, after excluding repetitions, and the profiles of the available stories were examined in five languages: English, Sepedi, Tshivenda, Xitsonga and isiZulu. Of the 214 stories, all were available in English, 93% were available in isiZulu, 87% in Sepedi, 59% in Xitsonga and 43% in Tshivenda.

The word counts of the stories by language are displayed in the trable below, including the number of responses, the mean standard deviation (Std. Dev.), minimum (Min) and maximum (Max) values. As the table shows, most stories are available in English (214), with the fewest stories available in Tshivenda (93). The mean is highest for Sepedi (925) and lowest for isiZulu (520), with English (746), Xitsonga (792) and Tshivenda (815) falling between them with similar averages. The differences outlined by the table are not unexpected, given the orthographic norms of the five languages and particularly that isiZulu uses a conjunctive orthography, while Sepedi uses a disjunctive orthography that includes spaces within as well as between meaning groups (i.e., words).

Table 14: Word count by language

Language	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
English	214	745.60	306.19	178	3610
isiZulu	199	519.99	207.26	117	2403
Sepedi	186	924.84	387.59	192	4464
Xitsonga	127	791.93	282.85	208	1294
Tshivenda	93	815.60	351.73	208	1862

Figure 8 demonstrates a relatively even spread of word count by language, with the exception of isiZulu which, as a conjunctive language, is made up of multi-syllabic individual words that amount to a similar syllable count, but lower overall word count. The relatively extreme maximums for English (3610) and Sepedi (4464) were found to be outliers, as they are from a few individual stories which are not available in most languages.
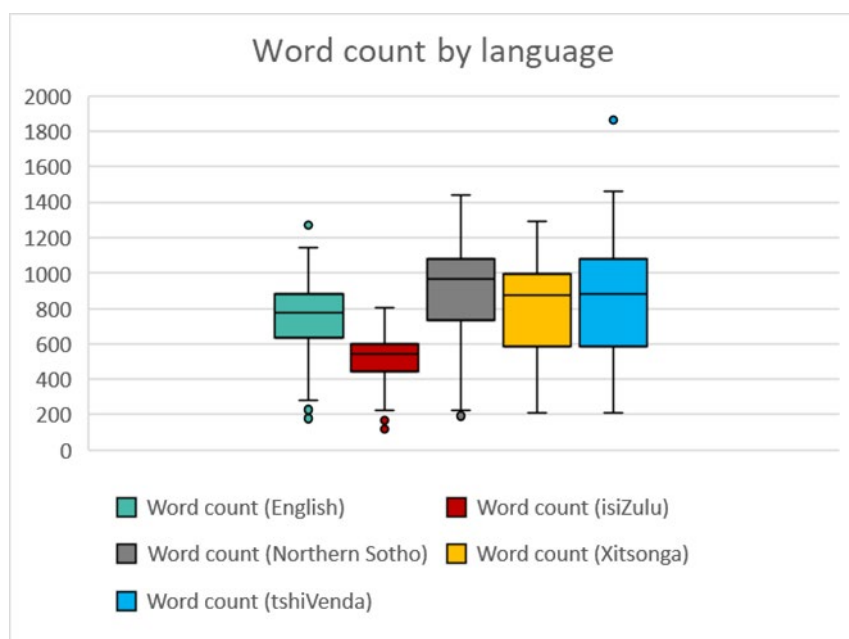
Figure 8: Boxplot showing the distribution of word count by language

Table 15 below displays the words per sentence metric by language, which gives further insight into the uniqueness of the construction of the different languages. Aligned with the higher average word count, Sepedi has the highest average number of words per sentence (10). English (8.14), Tshivenda (8.58), and Xitsonga (8.61) all have a similar average sentence lengths.

Table 15: Words per sentence by language

Language	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
English	214	8.14	2.51	3.4	19.7
isiZulu	199	5.59	1.68	2.3	12.5
Sepedi	186	9.98	3.28	3.9	25.2
Xitsonga	127	8.61	3.06	3.5	16.3
Tshivenda	93	8.58	3.20	3.6	15.9

Figure 9 below illustrates these differences in a box plot of the distribution of sentence length of all stories for each language. The longer box depicts Sepedi's longer average sentence length, as well as its larger standard deviation (3.28), though graphically, this is not significantly larger than the other languages, except for isiZulu (1.68).
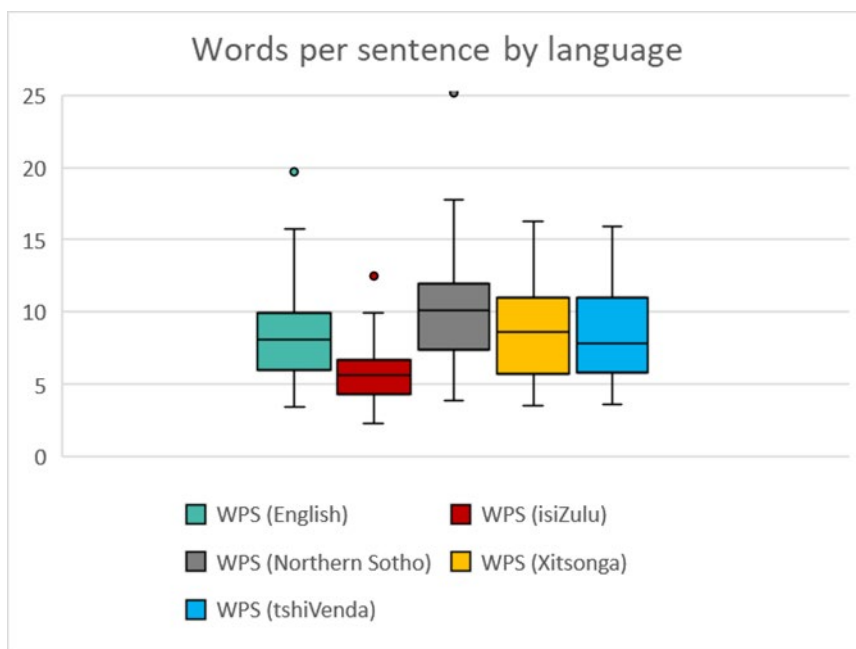
Figure 9: Boxplot showing distribution of words per sentence by language

Table 16 below is the summary statistics for syllables per word by language. The significantly higher average syllable count of isiZulu (3.28) is demonstrable of the conjunctive language construction relative to the other languages, which all have more similar means.

Table 16: Summary statistics for syllables per word by language

Language	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
English	214	1.35	0.07	1.2	1.6
isiZulu	198	3.28	0.12	3	3.7
Sepedi	185	1.67	0.10	1.3	1.9
Xitsonga	127	1.99	0.09	1.5	2.2
Tshivenda	93	1.67	0.08	1.5	2

Figure 10, a boxplot of the syllable per word measure, further depicts the stark difference between isiZulu and the other languages. It is also noticeable that Xitsonga and Sepedi have a higher spread (Std Dev of 0.09 and 0.1 respectively), but that this is likely due to outliers as shown in the figure.
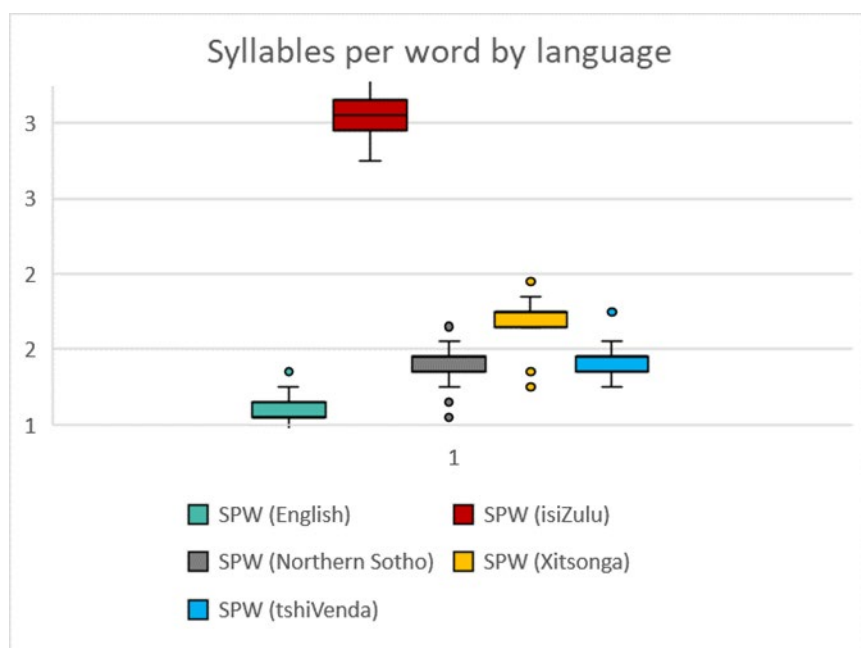
Figure 10: Boxplot showing syllables per word by language

The two tables that follow report the correlation of text statistics between each language. The word counts show high correlation, but syllables per word show a very weak association between languages. This demonstrates that the spread of story lengths is common across all the languages, but due to the innate difference in sentence construction between them, there is little association between their syllable counts.

Table 17: Correlation matrix of word count by language

Word count	English	isiZulu	Sepedi	Xitsonga	Tshivenda
English	1				
isiZulu	0.98	1			
Sepedi	0.98	0.99	1		
Xitsonga	0.98	0.98	0.99	1	
Tshivenda	0.94	0.94	0.98	0.98	1

Table 18: Correlation of syllables per word by language

Syllables per word	English	isiZulu	Sepedi	Xitsonga	Tshivenda
English	1				
isiZulu	0.30	1			
Sepedi	0.26	0.17	1		
Xitsonga	0.16	0.19	0.36	1	
Tshivenda	0.28	0.15	0.54	0.53	1

It is of note that Xitsonga and Sepedi and Tshivenda have the highest correlations (greater than 0.5) and that the weakest correlation is between isiZulu and Tshivenda (0.15) – again, not unexpected given the diversity

of language groups under study. These statistics and the length statistics show that Sepedi has the longest average sentence and story length, and that isiZulu has the lowest average sentence length and word count, but the highest average number of syllables per word. Tshivenda, Xitsonga and Sepedi have the most similar sentence constructions, demonstrated by their similar statistical distributions and high correlation of word count and syllables. Using the text statistics, the analysis is able to test for whether the distribution of story difficulty is equal among all languages, despite being unable to use traditional metrics of complexity on African languages.

3.5.2 Complexity

The selected metric of story complexity was the Flesch-Kincaid Reading Ease and Grade Level scores, captured using an online calculator tool. A further suggested grade score was manually calculated in English only using the text statistics as an additional check on the accuracy of the assigned/automatic scores. Discrepancies were double-checked and reconciled.

The Reading Ease measure is scaled from 0-100, with 80-100 denoting a simple, easy to read text for children between 7 and 11 years old. A score between 70-80 denotes relatively straightforward reading for children between 13 and 15 years old. Scores lower than 60 indicate that the text is fairly difficult to read. The Grade Level and suggested grade measures are measured in discrete numbers, indicating the grade level (between Grades 0-9) suggested for a given text.

Figure 11 below is a histogram of the distribution of Reading Ease scores captured from the Nal'ibali story repository. Most stories (65) were scored between 85-90, indicating simple text for children under 10 years old. There were some stories (42) which scored above 90, indicating extreme simplicity for much younger children. There were also 16 stories which scored below 75, which shows that there is some material for children in their early teens in the repository.
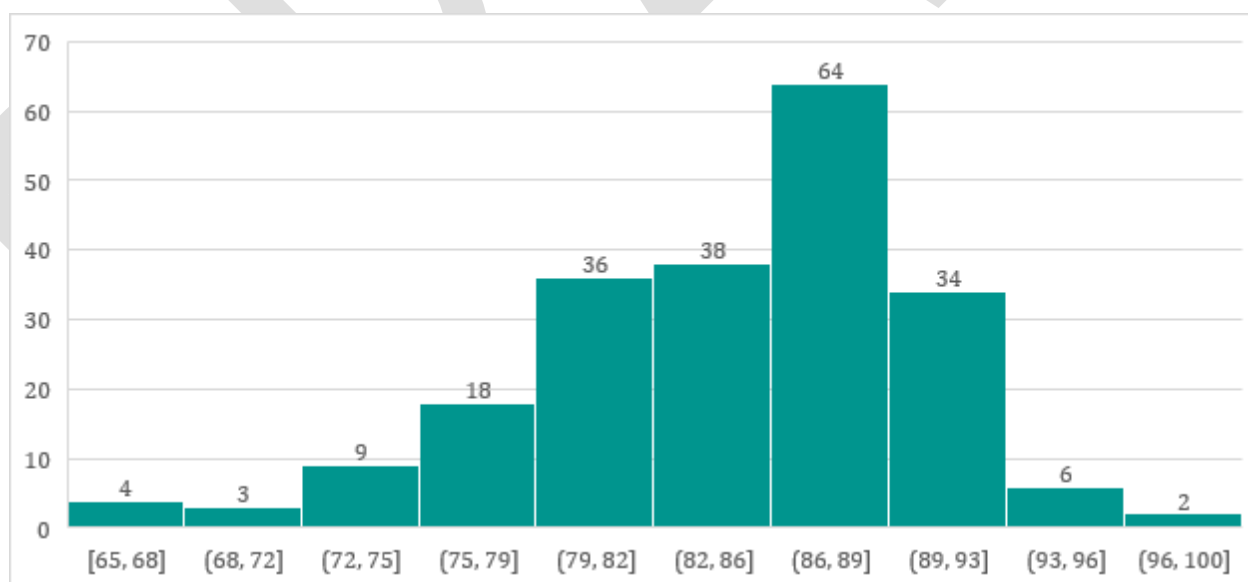
Figure 11: Distribution of reading ease scores of the Nal'ibali stories

The distribution of story complexity in the existing repository is further illustrated by Figure 12 below, which is a bar chart of the number of stories by grade level, using suggested grade level metrics that were manually calculated. This figure depicts a similar distribution to the Reading Ease score, with more stories falling in the targeted range of 7-10 years (Grades 1-4, 195 stories) than in the age range of 11 years and up (18).
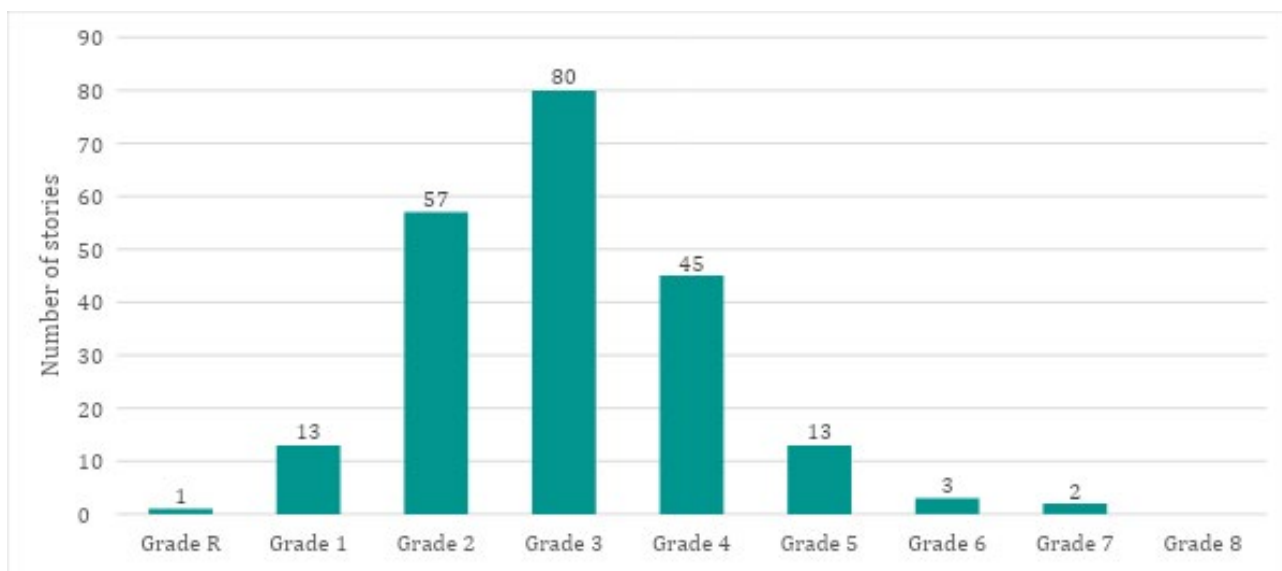
Figure 12: Number of stories by grade level

Although these metrics were only captured using the English texts, there is reasonable evidence that the correlated text statistics between the different languages are consistent with the complexity and readability measures. In the Figures 13 and 14 below, a scatter plot of each story in each available language is depicted against the relative Reading Level score captured for the English version. The near parallel trendlines in both word count and words per sentence measures demonstrate that the same profile of complexity exists across all the languages in the repository.
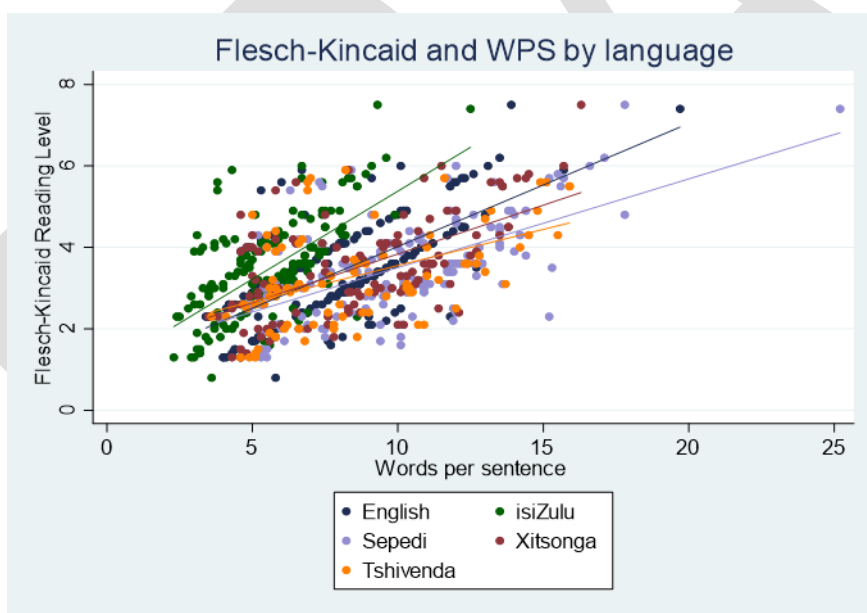
Figure 13: Scatterplot of reading level and words per sentence, by language

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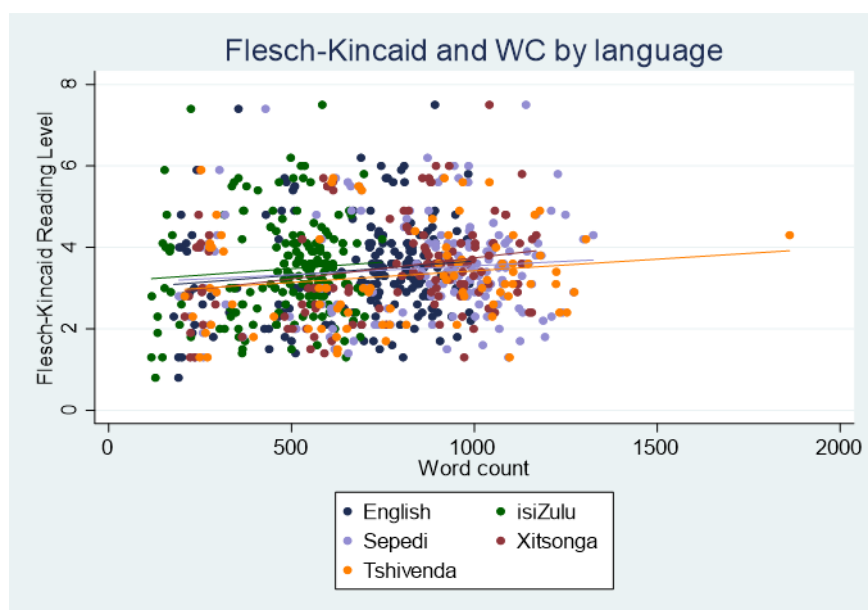
Figure 14: Scatterplot of reading score and word count, by language

To understand the construction of different texts at different levels of complexity, Table 19 displays the word counts and suggested grade level of the stories in the Nal'ibali repository by language. These statistics show that as word count increases, so does complexity, but that there is a taper off of the amount of additional complexity of a text above 1000 words. This emphasises that length should not be taken as a proxy for complexity, particularly for longer stories. To provide the level of reading complexity that will help children in the higher grades to develop their skills, Nal'ibali will need to focus on more difficult vocabulary and the variations in morphology and sentence construction that add complexity, for example, introducing more sentences with dependent clauses or two independent clauses, sentences with adjectival, prepositional, participial and infinitive phrases, and sentences with subjunctive verbs etc.

Table 19: Word count by suggested grade level, by language

Language	Suggested grade level							Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
English								
400-600	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	3
600-800	0	2	8	0	3	2	0	15
800-1000	0	2	5	3	1	3	0	14
1000-1200	0	1	5	4	2	0	1	13
1200-1400	0	3	9	28	12	3	1	56
More than 1500	1	1	22	42	22	4	1	93
Total	2	9	51	77	40	12	3	194
isiZulu								
200-400	0	2	4	2	3	1	0	12
400-600	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
600-800	0	2	8	0	3	2	0	15

Language	Suggested grade level							Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
800-1000	0	2	5	3	1	3	0	14
1000-1200	0	0	4	2	2	0	1	9
1200-1400	0	2	8	27	12	3	1	53
More than 1500	1	1	22	40	20	3	1	88
Total	2	9	51	74	41	12	3	192
Sepedi								
400-600	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	4
600-800	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
800-1000	0	0	5	0	2	0	0	7
1000-1200	0	4	4	1	2	5	0	16
1200-1400	0	0	6	1	0	0	0	7
More than 1500	1	3	27	60	32	6	3	132
Total	2	8	44	62	37	12	3	168
Xitsonga								
400-600	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
600-800	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
800-1000	0	3	8	1	1	3	0	16
1000-1200	0	1	4	1	0	2	0	8
1200-1400	0	0	3	1	1	0	0	5
More than 1500	1	1	17	33	19	6	2	79
Total	1	6	34	36	21	11	2	111
Tshivenda								
400-600	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	4
600-800	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
800-1000	0	0	5	1	1	0	0	7
1000-1200	0	3	5	0	0	5	0	13
1200-1400	0	1	4	1	0	0	0	6
More than 1500	0	1	12	21	8	4	0	46
Total	0	6	28	24	10	9	0	77

To depict where there are gaps between story availability in certain languages at different levels of complexity, the following figure shows the distribution of stories by the suggested grade level and the languages in which they are available. There is a near identical availability of stories in isiZulu and English across all grade levels, and slightly fewer Sepedi stories available at all grade levels. In the highest and lowest grades, there is a near identical availability for all stories in each language, but a noticeable scarce availability of Xitsonga and Tshivenda stories in Grades 3-5.
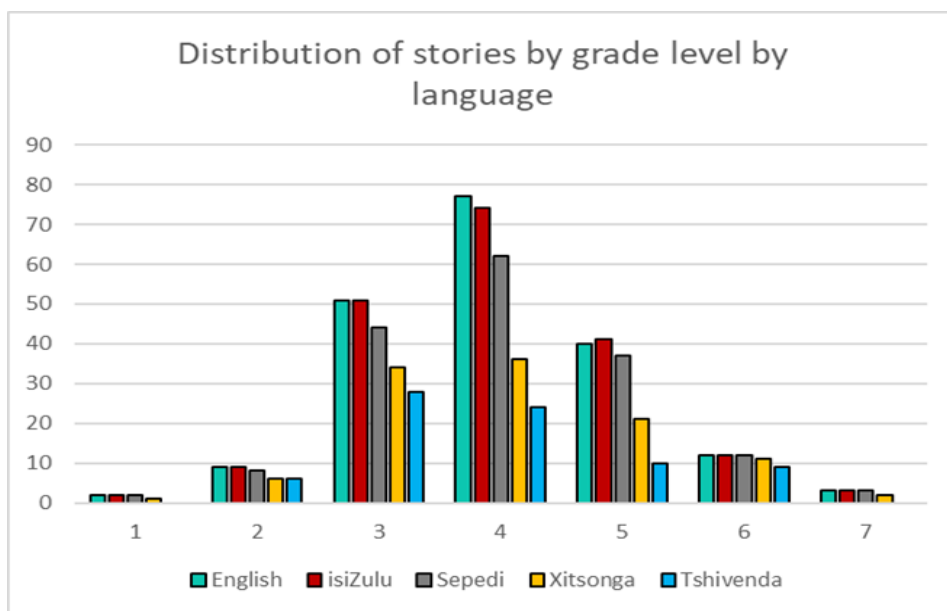
Figure 15: Distribution of stories by grade level, by language

3.5.3 Genre

To assess the profile of the story repository by genre, the listed genres from the archive provided by Nal'ibali were captured and analysed.

The most frequently occurring genre was stories with a life-lesson and stories with animal characters. Feel-good and fantasy stories were also prominent, closely followed by comedy stories and then traditional tales. There were very few stories based on real-life found in the repository (see Figure 16).
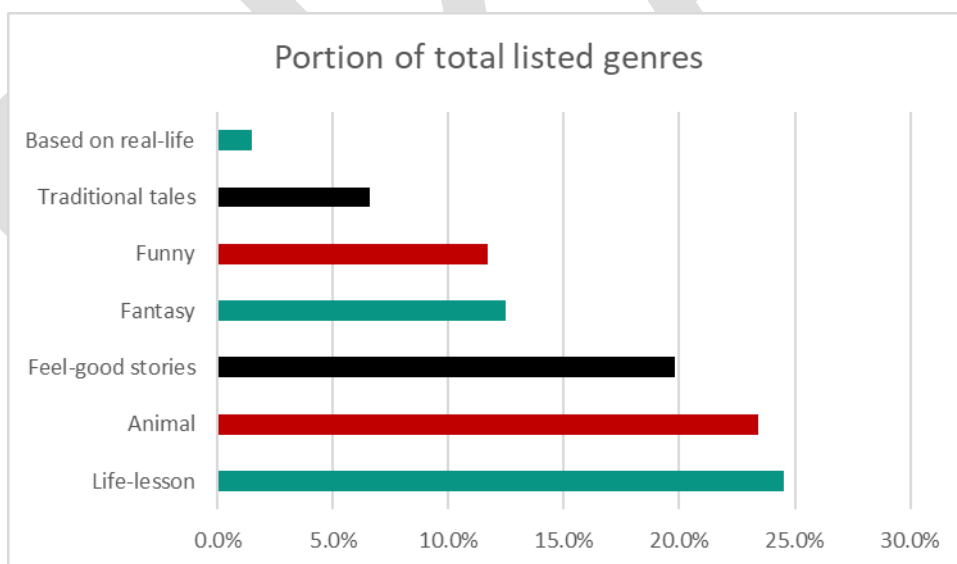
Figure 16: Proportion of total by listed genre

Table 20 below provides more detail on the genre disposition from the story repository. It must be noted that not all stories in the archive had genres listed, and some stories had more than one genre attributed. These figures represent the overall occurrence of these genres in the database of 214 analysed stories. The

percentages of WhatsApp survey respondents indicating they liked to read the particular genre to children are also provided in Table 20, as well as a rank assignment (highest to lowest percentage) for each genre in the Nal'ibali database and the WhatsApp survey.

Table 20: Listed genres of Nal'ibali stories

Genre	Count	%	% preferring this genre (WhatsApp survey)	Rank, Nal'ibali database	Rank, WhatsApp survey preferences
Animal	64	23.4%	22.5%	2	1
Contemporary	0	0.0%	1.4%	no stories	10
Fantasy	34	12.5%	9.3%	4	5
Feel-good stories	54	19.8%	9.4%	3	4
Funny	32	11.7%	15.3%	5	3
Life-lesson	67	24.5%	16.2%	1	2
Newspaper stories	0	0.0%	3.2%	no stories	9
Poetry	0	0.0%	3.9%	no stories	8
Real-life	4	1.5%	7.0%	7	6
Religious stories	0	0.0%	5.8%	no stories	7
Traditional tales	18	6.6%	5.8%	6	7
Total	273	100.0%	100.0%		

Table 20 shows that the rankings between the two measures are generally similar for most categories. Table 21 offers another view of this phenomenon by providing a dashboard that presents both rankings in juxtaposition. The white boxes represent equivalency, or items which would have been ranked exactly the same in both datasets. Themes in yellow boxes are under-represented in the Nal'ibali database, compared to WhatsApp preferences, while themes in cyan boxes are over-represented in the Nal'ibali database compared to WhatsApp preferences. The farther from the white boxes a theme appears, the greater the discrepancy[13].

Table 21: Rank assignment (highest to lowest percentage) for each genre in the Nal'ibali database and the WhatsApp survey

		Rank, WhatsApp survey									
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Rank, Nal'ibali data-base	1	Life-lesson/ Animal	Life-lesson								
	2	Animal	2	Funny							

---

[13] Note that some columns are 'blank' due to tied rankings in one dataset or the other (e.g., traditional tales and religious stories were ranked equally in the WhatsApp survey data).

3		Feel-good	3	Feel-good					
4			Fantasy	4	Fantasy				
5				Funny	5	Real-life			
6					Traditio-nal	6	Traditio-nal/ Religious		
7						Real-life	7	Poetry	
8								8	News-paper
9									9	Contemp-orary
10										10

3.5.4 Themes

Qualitative research showed that children who indicated that they had asked their parents to buy them books asked for a range of topics including books about baking, Transformers, the Three Little Bears, a book about a child who was disrespectful and got into trouble, and a book about a teacher who was kind to their learners. Children enjoy the content of these stories, and when asked what they like about these stories, they recounted the specific parts that they liked. A number of children mentioned books on baking and said that these books have taught them baking skills, with some learners indicating that they can even bake cakes.

When asked what books they would like to get at a bookstore, children listed a range of topics including funny stories, colouring books, stories about animals, books about Cocomelon, books about traditional tales, and books on decor so that they can plan their birthday parties. It is also interesting to note that some children are happy with the books that they read at the reading club and at school and indicated that they would like to obtain their own copies of those books. Additionally, some children who had not asked their parents to buy them books reported that they use the library to source books, while other children read the available books at home, either Nal'ibali books or other books their siblings bring inot the home, as explained by this learner:

> *Owam umama andikamcelike but kodwa ndiyazifunda ezabantwana base khaya. Like umntasekhaya, ndine brothers eziyi two. Omnye ufunda u grade ten omnye ufunda u grade eight. So, ndithatha iincwadi zalo, zaku grade seven lo ufunda grade eight ndizifunde. Eze English okanye ezesiXhosa. So, umamam xa enemali and umntasekhaya, lo ufunda u grade ten uzokoluka this year ngo December. So, umama wam andikamceli because funeka abhatale, izinto zimntasekhaya zoko luka. (I have not asked my mother (to buy me books) but I read my siblings' books. I have two brothers. One is in grade ten and one is in grade eight. So I take the books from the one who is in grade eight and read them. Both the English and isiXhosa ones. My brother who is in grade ten is going to*

initiation school in December. So I have not asked my mother because she has to use her money to buy things for the initiation.) Site2CFG1012

3.5.5 Collocation analysis

In addition to qualitative data collection, collocation analysis (see section 2.5.) was undertaken as a supplement to the research in order to better understand some aspects of the Nal'ibali corpus of stories. The collocation analysis findings reported below contribute a more nuanced view to the composition, topics and relationships in the stories presented by Nal'ibali.

Family relationship words

Nal'ibali stories convey a strong sense of family, with the mother figure being prominent across the stories evaluated. The mother figure is mentioned in different cultural references, for instance, in order of frequency of appearance in the texts: 'mama' (360 appearances), 'mother' (264) and 'mom' (153). These are just the top four words denoting mother, and together they appear over a hundred times each, adding up to a total of 777 mentions. Other words appearing in the texts that refer to motherhood are 'mme', 'momma', 'mummy', 'madam', 'mfazi'.

The father figure comes out strongly as well within these stories, although to a lesser extent than the mother figure. For instance, the words that denote fatherhood that appear most frequently are 'dad' (148 times), and 'father' (113), followed by papa (54). 'Baba' and 'daddy' are the other words used to denote fatherhood.

Parents, with reference to a home with two or more legal guardians such as a father and mother are also referred to (51 times).

Parents are not the only family reference that is prominent in the stories. The extended family across generations is also mentioned. While the word 'grandparents' only appears once in the stories, the gendered versions of the word appear at higher frequencies. The word 'gogo' [has the highest frequency at255 mentions, followed by the words 'grandmother' (29) and 'ouma' (10).

For the male side of the family equation, 'grandpa', 'grandfather' and 'oupa' are the words that come out of the stories, with 23, 18 and 16 mentions respectively, and again, with fewer instances than the female versions of these words.

Familial relationships are also prominent in the stories. 'Children' is mentioned 148 times, 'baby' 60, 'sister' 41 and 'brother' 30. This shows that the stories are focused on young people as characters, which is possibly related to the stories' target audience. 'Aunt', 'uncle' and 'cousin' also appear in the texts.
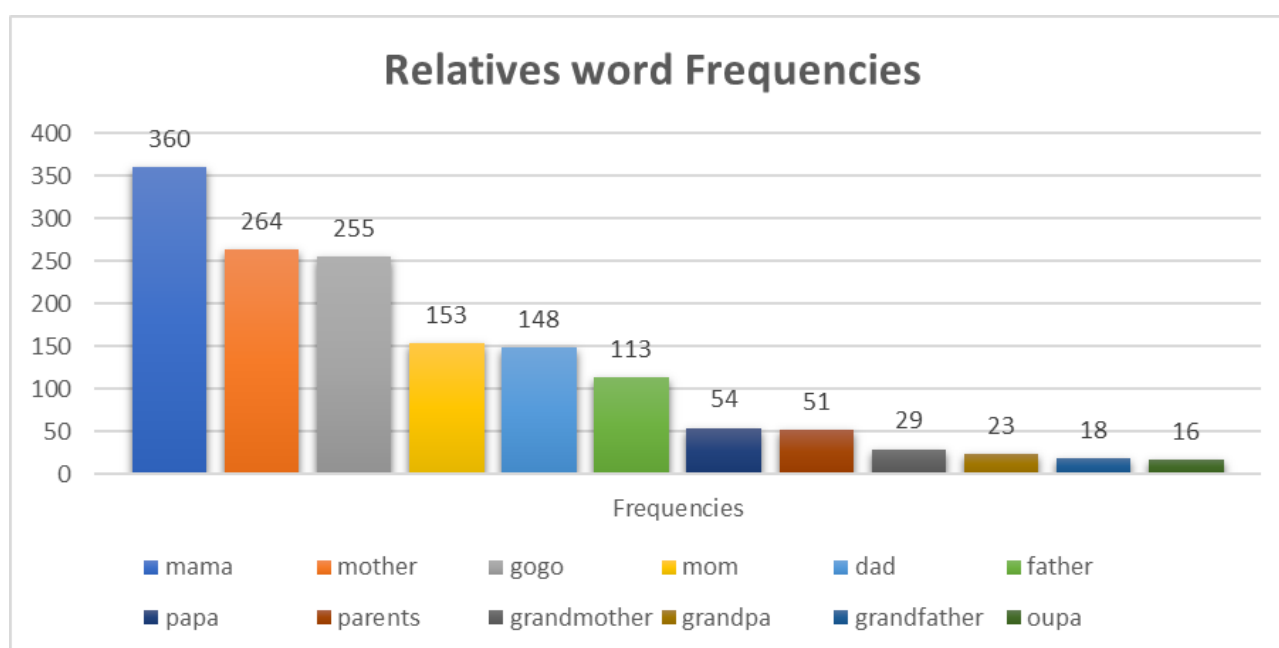
Figure 17: Relative frequency of relationship words in the Nal'ibali corpus

Gender words

The words appearing most commonly to refer to the female character include 'woman' (168 mentions), 'girl' (76), 'lady' (50) and 'wife' (44). In total, these words appear 338 times with 'woman' being the most prominent. With regard to the male character across the stories, the words 'man' (177), 'boy' (174) and 'husband' (24) are used and appear 353 times across the stories. What is interesting is that 'man' appears slightly more times than 'woman', and the boy character is referred to significantly more times than the girl character contrast to the mother vs. father figure references in the stories. The exception is that 'wife' appears more than 'husband', at double the rate. In addition to 'husband' and 'wife', other relationship references occur in the Nal'ibali stories but interestingly, the word 'girlfriend' does appear, even though 'boyfriend' appears five times. In one of these occurrences, 'boyfriend' is not used to refer to an actual relationship but is rather pat of playful taunting between two girls.

Males and females are portrayed quite differently in the overall corpus, particularly in terms of the emotions ascribed to them most often. While the same types of emotions are used with reference to both males and females, there are differences in the prominence with which they are ascribed to each gender. It was found that males and females are equally likely to be associated with the emotions 'happy' and 'tired', with both being fairly prominent collocates for both genders [14]. For males, another prominent emotion-related collocate is 'hungry', with 'tired', 'angry' and 'scared' also featuring. Females were found to be more likely than males to collocate with 'scared' or 'sad' [15] in the Nal'ibali stories reviewed. Females are also not as likely as males to be associated with anger in the stories.

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[14] Note that no non-binary characters were observed in the stories in English. In African languages it would be less clear if characters conform to binary genders, as pronouns are not gendered in the same way.

[15] Note that the majority of references to 'sad' came from one story character, so this difference should not be given too much weight.
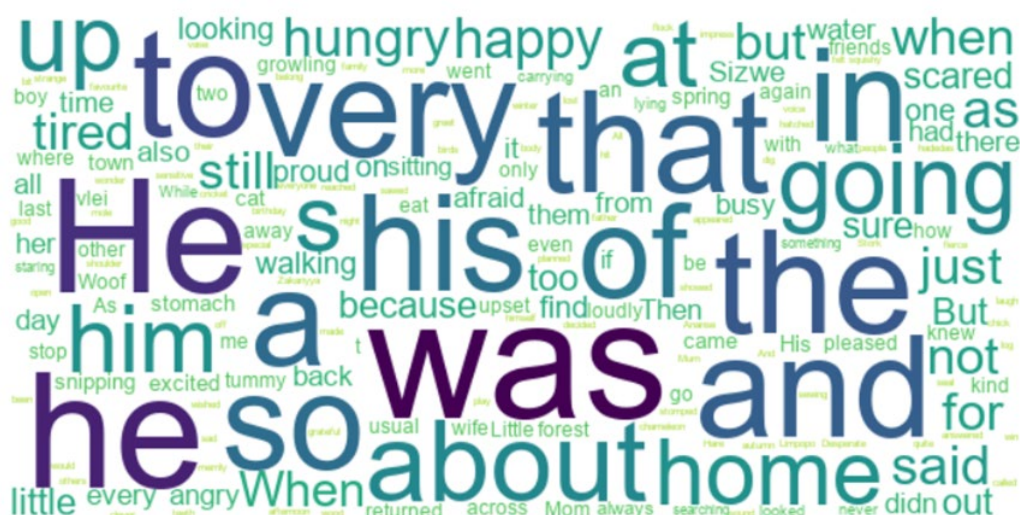
Figure 18: Word cloud of words related to 'he' in the Nal'ibali corpus
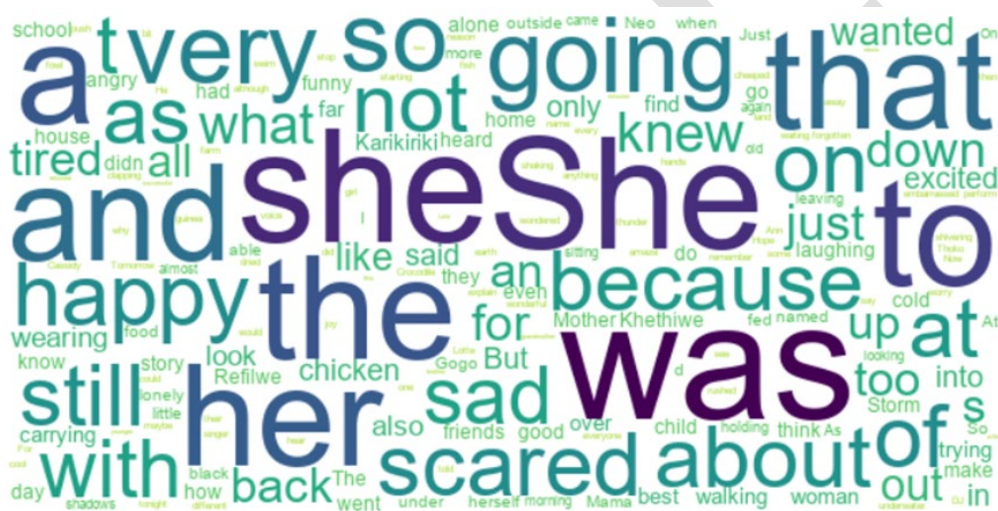
Figure 19: Word cloud of words related to 'she' in the Nal'ibali corpus

Education words

Education is a theme that features prominently in the stories, both in the formal and informal sense. Formal education is signified by reference to institutions such as the school(s), appearing 140 times. University only appeared once in the texts, with one of the characters expressing an ambition to one day go to university after high school due to the hard work they are putting in.

Schoolwork is mentioned once in the stories, in a science fiction story about learners using the internet to complete homework assignments in a village where there are flying cars.

The school environment also appears in a negative light in a story in which a group of learners is bullying another in the 'schoolyard'. The collocation analysis reveals that school is most often portrayed as a place learners leave or go to. It is significant that 'came' and 'home' appear prominently in relation to 'school'. Books are associated with libraries, less so with school - school is not often portrayed as a place for literacy, learning or enjoyment in the world of Nal'ibali.

Figure 20: Word cloud of words related to 'school' in the Nal'ibali corpus
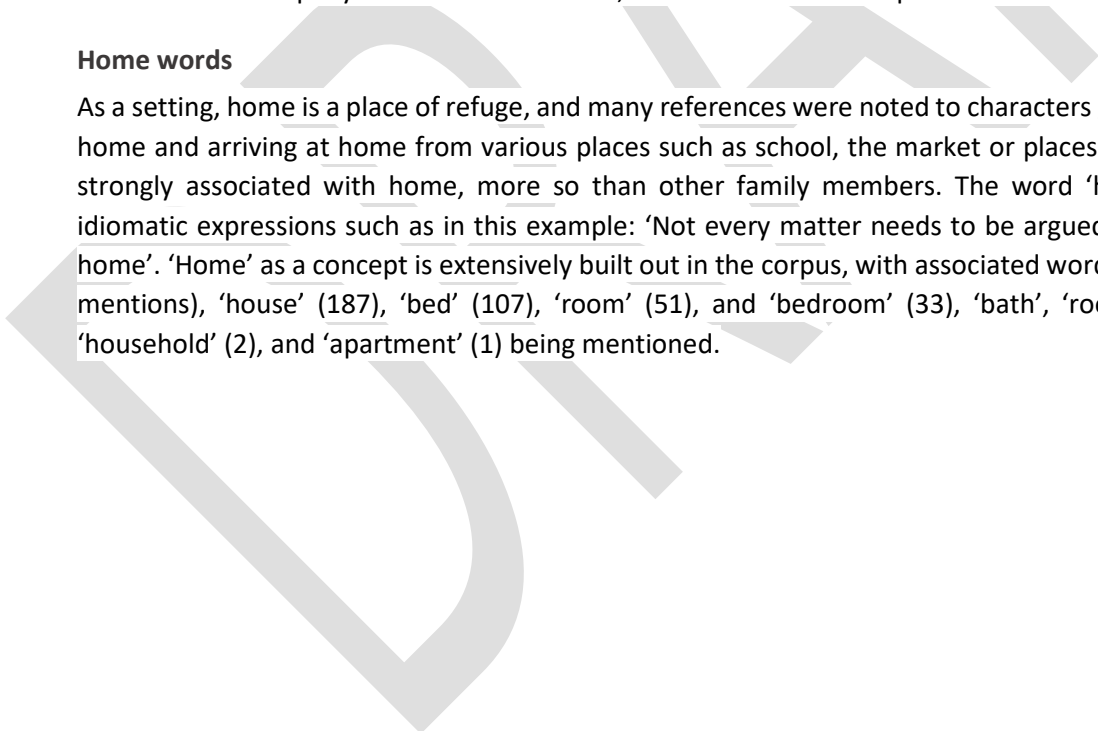
On the theme of learning, 'books' are mentioned 53 times, with 4 of those being noted as 'storybooks'. 'Library' is mentioned 49 times, as many times as the word 'books'. There is a closer association between 'books' and 'libraries' than between 'books' and 'schools'. Positive sentiments are ascribed to books, where young people are seen reading books to others, borrowing books from the library, recognising that they can learn a lot from books and that books can take one to other places. 'Read' comes up 81 times and 'reading' 22 times to accompany the mention of books, which confirms the importance Nali'ibali places on reading. s.

Home words

As a setting, home is a place of refuge, and many references were noted to characters going home, returning home and arriving at home from various places such as school, the market or places of work. Mothers are strongly associated with home, more so than other family members. The word 'home' is also used in idiomatic expressions such as in this example: 'Not every matter needs to be argued until the cows come home'. 'Home' as a concept is extensively built out in the corpus, with associated words such as 'home' (328 mentions), 'house' (187), 'bed' (107), 'room' (51), and 'bedroom' (33), 'bath', 'roof' (28), 'indoors' (3), 'household' (2), and 'apartment' (1) being mentioned.

Figure 21: Word cloud for words related to 'home' in the Nal'ibali corpus

Sentiment words

In the area of sentiment, the emotions that are shown in the stories are varied. Looking at the positive ones first, the words 'happy' (153), 'happily' (23) and 'happiness' (11) appear numerous times, signifying that the Nal'ibali stories attach good emotions to the stories they focus on. The word 'glad' also appears 13 times in the texts.

Gratitude is also prominent in the stories: the words used to convey this, 'thank' (73), 'thanked' (15) and 'thanks' (12) appear numerous times and permeate the stories.

There are a total of seven mentions of the sentiment of apology: 'apologised' (3), 'apology' (3) and 'apologise' (1). This is a signifier of some conflict between the characters and acknowledgment of an offence or wrongdoing, with attempts to make amends. The words that usually accompany apologetic sentiments appeared almost the same number of times, as follows: 'forgive' (4), 'forgiveness' (2), 'forgave' (1) and 'forgiven' (1), creating a balance between conflict that arises between the characters and the resolution of issues.

When it comes to negative emotions, 'sad' (88), 'sadly' (26) and 'sadness' (9) appear in a number of instances, with several relating to one particular character. This character is female, as noted above.

Animal words

Mentions of animals, both domestic and wild, occur with high frequencies. For instance, 'dog' is mentioned 147 times, 'bird' 121, 'tortoise' 109, 'lion' 106, 'chameleon' 105, 'chicken' 103 and 'birds' 102, each being mentioned over 100 times. In addition, a substantial number of other animals are mentioned over 50 times each: 'hare' (98), 'jackal' (98), 'crocodile' (95), 'monkey' (93), 'cat' (88), 'pig' (81), 'fish' (78), 'leopard' (71), 'mouse' (71), 'rabbit' (68), 'giraffe' (61) and 'owl' (54).

Conflict words

Conflict is also covered in the stories, both between the human characters and among animals. The fighting described is both physical and non-physical. An example of physical conflict is the story of a father going to war, and an example of non-physical conflict is characters competing to gain the attention of another character.

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Nature words

The battle with nature is signified by natural disasters such as flooding which makes an appearance in the stories. The wind is also part of the natural environment that has to be contended with, but what is interesting is that 'wind' is often used in idiomatic expressions across the stories.

Supernatural words

'Angels' are referenced 21 times and 'fairies' five times in the stories to add to the whimsical nature of some of the stories.

Work words

It important to depict people who are professionals or working at different jobs in children's stories as this helps children to be inspired about their own future identities. Some of the jobs, occupations, types of workers and roles in society mentioned in the stories and their frequency of mentions are as follows: 'farmer' (138 mentions), 'king(s)' (138), 'chief' (57), 'doctor' (24), 'baker' (18), 'librarian' (18), 'policeman' (12) and 'rainmaker' (12). It is notable that 'farmer', a very important role as a custodian of food security and thus the well-being of the communities they exist in, is the most prominent of the occupations mentioned. Moreover, 'village' (122) also appears frequently, with 'villagers' appearing 22 tomes. This is in contrast to 'city', which appears only 40 time, indicating that the stories have rural more often than urban settings.

Figure 22: Word cloud for words associated with 'village' in the Nal'ibali corpus

3.5.6 Summary

Overall, it seems Nal'ibali is meeting the needs of the target audience in terms of languages and genre. Nal'ibali stories are largely clustered at the lower end of their target age range, with about half of stories appropriate for kindergarten or Grade 1 readers. Fewer stories are at a level of complexity that would appeal to readers above Grade 3, with almost no stories in the repository for children in Grades 5 to 8.

In terms of themes in the Nal'ibali database, collocation analysis showed that the family is promoted in the stories, with a stronger presence of mothers than fathers. The gender balance of stories overall, however,

leans towards male protagonists, and more care could be taken to ensure that one gender is not more heavily associated with negative emotions, such as girls being portrayed more often that boys as being 'sad' or 'scared'.

An area that needs special attention from Nal'ibali is the stories that concern education, and especially the school as an institution of learning. This aspect is largely missing from the corpus under analysis, and the few mentions of school are associated with negative experiences such as bullying. Even 'books' and 'reading' collocate more often with 'libraries' than 'school', and although it could be assumed that some libraries might be schools, it does not come through in the stories. Since some of the reading clubs where Nal'libali materials are read are in schools, a more prominent and positive link to 'school' and 'reading' and 'books' could have a strong positive influence on Nal'ibali's young readers of. Regarding the occupations or jobs that appear in the stories, the most frequent ones are traditional occupations; this is seen as positive as these occupations are important and readers can identify them easily; however the mention of new types of jobs and occupations could open readers to new possibilities in the world around them and expand their imaginations about future prospects.

3.6   How well is Nal'bali meeting market needs?

Previous sections provide detailed findings on how Nal'ibali is meeting market needs in terms of language, complexity, themes and genres, with the market considered as comprising both Nal'ibali beneficiaries as well as, where possible, the broader South African population as represented by the NRB data. Please refer to previous sections for these findings.

This section focuses specifically on a cost analysis, which was undertaken to determine whether the channels and platforms currently used by Nal'ibali are providing value-for-money in terms of their reach (e.g., providing access to beneficiaries or potential beneficiaries).

The cost of an intervention or programe, as defined by Levin and McEwan (2001), encompasses the value of all resources employed by the intervention, considering what those resources could have been used for in their most valuable alternative application. This concept is based on the notion of opportunity cost, which highlights the value foregone by choosing one course of action over the best alternative. In cost analysis, the consideration of opportunity cost helps capture the full economic impact of the intervention by recognising the value of resources in their next best alternative use. By evaluating what could have been gained or achieved by allocating those resources elsewhere, the true cost of the intervention becomes apparent.

The analysis of costs associated with the Nal'ibali story materials provides answers to the question: How well is Nal'ibali meeting market needs? This assessment considers the costs of production and the potential reach for various materials.

3.6.1   Supplements

We present the findings for the cost effectiveness analysis of the print version of the Nal'ibali multilingual supplement. The supplement is distributed to reading clubs, organisations, newspapers and schools. Table 22 lists the ingredients, cost, quantity and unit costs for the supplement. It provides a breakdown of the costs associated with different types of supplements for the year 2022.

The table below provides the costs associated with the cost category of each supplement. The production process, which involves tasks like editing, proofreading, cross checking for potential issues affecting

translations, actual translation work, design and setting up files for distribution, constitutes the highest cost category at approximately R3 546 673.10 with a quantity of 2 424 714 units, which is a unit cost of around R1.46 per unit. Printing of the produced materials accounts for the second highest cost, totalling around R2 772 727.57. The printing cost incurred for the 2 424 714 units produced resulted in a unit cost of approximately R1.14 per resource. The distribution of materials through post offices costs about R279 746.94. With a distribution quantity of 1 125 688 units, the unit cost for the method is approximately R0.25. Distributing materials via special partners incurred a cost of R3 855.57 for a quantity of 33 651 units, leading to a unit cost of approximately R0.11 per item. Distribution through partners amounts to approximately R405 900.65. With a distribution quantity of 357 551 units, the unit cost for this category matches the printing cost, at approximately R1.14 per unit. Distribution through newspapers is associated with a cost of about R293 715.00 for a distribution quantity of 900 000 units. The unit cost for this distribution method is approximately R0.33.

The total cost amounted to approximately R7 302 618.83 for a total quantity of 7 266 318 units. The overall average unit cost across all categories is approximately R4.43. The production, printing and distribution via partners are the major cost contributors, while distribution via special partners, post offices and newspapers has relatively lower costs.

Table 22: Cost of supplements by cost category

Cost Category	Cost	Quantity	Unit Cost
Production	R3 546 673.10	2 424 714	R1.46
Printing	R2 772 727.57	2 424 714	R1.14
Distribution via Post Offices	R279 746.94	1 125 688	R0.25
Distribution via Special Partners	R3 855.57	33 651	R0.11
Distribution via Partners	R405 900.65	357 551	R1.14
Distribution via Newspapers	R293 715.00	900 000	R0.33
Total	**R7 302 618.83**	**7266318**	**R4.43**

3.6.2 Television, radio and Whatsapp delibery modes

Table 23 presents the cost of alternative delivery modes for the intervention. The cost categories include television episodes, radio stories and website and Whatsapp stories. In terms of television episodes, the cost incurred is R300 000.00 for a quantity of 12 episodes, resulting in an average unit cost of R25 000.00 per episode. For radio stories, the cost is R2 338 628.50 for a quantity of 52 stories that aired on 11 radio stations across the country, resulting in an average unit cost of approximately R44 973.63 per story. Website and Whatsapp stories incur a cost of R1 687 212.,56 for a quantity of 5 908 290 stories, resulting in an average unit cost of approximately R0.29 per story[16]. Radio story episodes incurred a production cost of R2.34 million and have a massive audience reach of 416 million listeners, resulting in a remarkably low unit cost of R0.0056 per listener. On the other hand, TV episodes cost R300 000 to produce and attract a viewership of 38.3 million, translating to a slightly higher unit cost of R0.0078 per viewer. Despite the higher overall production

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[16] The interpretation is based on the provided data, and further analysis will be required once the data on the size of the audiences reached is available to refine the cost calculations and evaluate the cost-effectiveness of the alternative delivery modes.

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cost for radio, its cost-effectiveness per listener is evident, making it an efficient choice for reaching a broad audience. In contrast, TV episodes have a lower production expense but a slightly higher unit cost per viewer. The higher production costs for radio episodes could be attributed to the fact that a larger volume of content was created, with 52 episodes spread across 11 different radio stations. In contrast, TV production involved only 12 episodes. The increased episode count across multiple radio stations might have contributed to the higher overall cost, reflecting the extensive production efforts required for a broader reach.

TV and radio delivery modes are often considered expensive due to high production costs. While they have the potential for larger audience reach compared to printed media, the actual reach cannot be confirmed without specific data. On the other hand, WhatsApp/website stories leverage existing production costs, making them effectively free as they exclude printing and distribution costs. This cost advantage enables the intervention to reach a wide audience at a minimal cost.

Table 23: Costs of alternative delivery modes

Cost Category	Cost	Quantity	Unit Cost
TV episodes	R300 000.00	38 304 000	R0.0078
Radio stories	R2 338 628.50	416 000 000	R0.0056
Website and Whatsapp Stories	R1 687 212.56	5 908 290	R0.29

3.6.3 Summary

The cost analysis shows the cost associated with various categories, such as production, printing, and distribution using different strategies. The production costs were relatively low compared to printing and distribution expenses. With a low unit cost of R0.0056 per listener, radio episodes appear cost-effective in terms of the broad reach they achieve. The unit cost for TV episodes stands at R0.0078 per viewer, suggesting that while production expenses are higher, the cost per viewer remains relatively reasonable. The expenses related to website and Whatsapp stories total R1 687 212.56. These stories are accessed by 5.9 million unique users, resulting in a unit cost of R0.29 per user. This category reflects a relatively reasonable unit cost. This could potentially be due to the more targeted nature of the digital platform.

3.7 Uptake of Nal'ibali materials

This section looks at the potential gaps in and recommendations to increase the uptake of Nal'ibali materials. The methods examined include changes to provisioning strategy, delivery platforms, delivery formats and/or delivery of content, with regards to each age group and designed to scale.

3.7.1 Format and languages of materials

Nal'ibali's target audience demonstrates a preference for both digital and print materials. For fiction and leisure reading, print materials are favoured, while educational materials are preferred in digital formats for

ease of access. It is commendable and encouraging that Nal'ibali delivers materials through various channels, including WhatsApp, online platforms, television, radio, and printed supplements in newspapers and magazines. This approach aligns well with the diverse preferences of the audience, ensuring effective reach.

Considering the findings regarding libraries, while they may not be the most popular source of books, they are still relied upon by a significant portion of readers, particularly where school libraries are not accessible. This presents an opportunity for Nal'ibali to explore partnerships and collaborations with community libraries to further engage the audience.

Language preferences within Nal'ibali's target audience are diverse, with parents frequently reading to their children in multiple languages. While providing materials in all languages equally may be challenging and costly, the universality of English as a preferred language offers an efficient means of reaching a substantial audience. However, the survey reveals that readers' motivation to read would improve significantly if stories better reflected their daily lives and were available in more languages (see Figure 23). Therefore, it is recommended to continue and, where possible, expand the delivery of Nal'ibali materials in all South African languages to enhance audience engagement.

An additional recommendation is to engage parents and caregivers in exploring new reading initiatives and expanding their access to reading materials in various languages. Currently, according to the NRB survey only a small percentage of respondents participate in reading clubs (8%). To promote reading habits, particularly among children, efforts should be made to raise awareness and encourage more adults to participate in reading initiatives for themselves through Nal'ibali. This would also boost adults' confidence in reading, leading to increased reading with children. Notably, more than 70% of adults agree or strongly agree that they would read more with children if they felt more confident in reading.
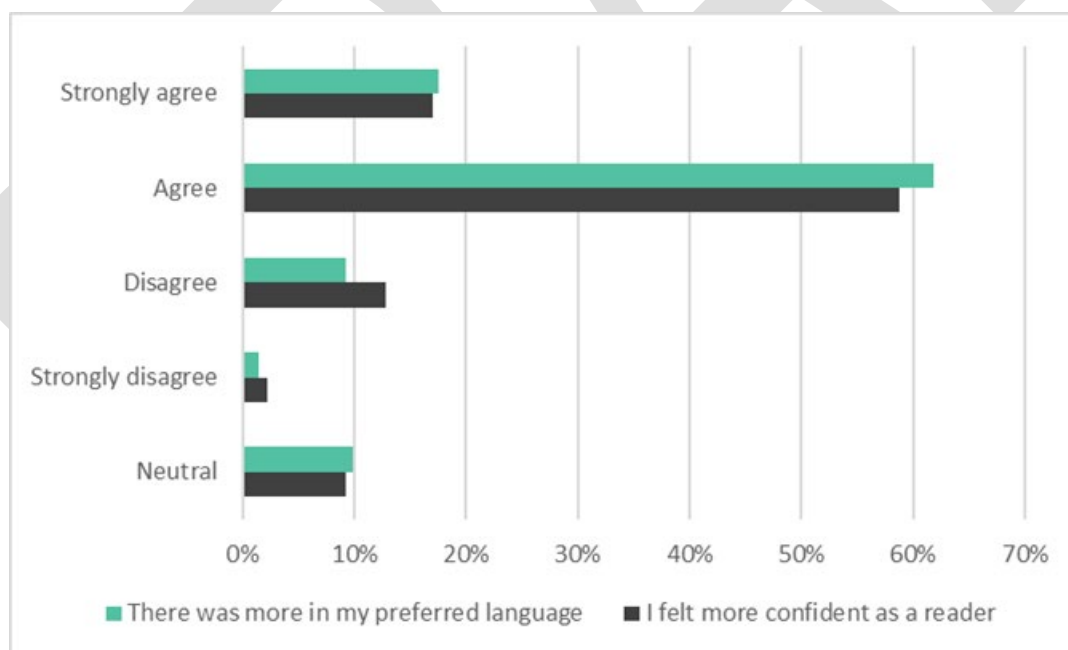

Figure 23: NRB question BM4: I would read more with children if…

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3.7.2 Distribution channels

As discussed above, most of the sites visited for the evaluation were SEF based sites which receive direct delivery via provincial coordinators or courier. The post office is the most accessible and affordable method of distributing Nal'ibali materials, however in some areas post offices are closing down, or they are vandalised and not functional anymore. Courier or direct delivery is the most convenient option, however this is expensive and not sustainable given the resources that Nal'ibali has. Additionally, in some areas in the Eastern Cape, courier is also not a viable option due to distance or the condition of the roads. People in the Eastern Cape mainly get reading materials directly from Nal'ibali as libraries are far from communities or are dysfunctional. Although partners are encouraged to use the website and WhatsApp to access more Nal'ibali resources including audio stories, not everyone is able to access these due to challenges with data and network challenges in more rural areas. According to staff on the ground, the Moya app is another source for Nal'ibali materials, although this is not widely known.

The provincial coordinators in both provinces play a large role in delivering Nal'ibali materials to areas where the post office or courier is not accessible, however, capacity issues and heavy admin load for staff on the ground contribute to staff not being able to reach as many areas as they can for delivery of materials. In areas where there is a SEF coordinator, communities are mostly guaranteed to receive materials as they know that the literacy facilitator in the areas comes twice a week and ensures that the group receives their expected number of books and that the reading clubs also receive their expected number of books.

Libraries are key spaces and in Gauteng, library usage is being promoted. Currently over 200 community members and Nal'ibali staff in the areas that Nal'ibali operates in have signed up for library cards. The staff members signing up for library cards is key as they need to lead by example.

Television and radio

TV and radio shows also present opportunities to understand where children's interests may lie. While only some children listen to the radio, most learners watch television. Children watch mainly for entertainment and seeing their favourite characters for inspiration. Children's favourite television shows include cartoons, movies and local series. Learners like the shows because they are funny or because they contain an element of learning. For example, one learner who said that 'Cocomelon' is their favourite show said that they like the show because it helps them:

> *Ngokuba bayasinantsika, bayasinceda nathi. Basenzisa lanto bayenzayo. (Because it helps us as well. They make us do what they are doing) -Site3CFG0609*

Another learner mentioned that they like DragonballZ because it helps with learning English and isiXhosa. This learner also mentioned that the show kept them company and kept them from being bored during a period when they were healing from an accident. Two learners who like the South African show 'Uzalo' mentioned that they like one of the main characters because of their possessions in the form of money, cars and a big house. Children also enjoy cartoons that make them laugh including 'Teen Titans'.

Fewer children overall listen to the radio but more children in the Eastern Cape than Gauteng listen to the radio. Children in Gauteng who enjoy listening to the radio said that they like listening to the radio because they like hearing about new things that they did not know about. In the Eastern Cape, children who enjoy listening to the radio enjoy it for different reasons. Learners enjoy Umhlobo Wenene, the national isiXhosa radio station. One learner said that they like Umhlobo Wenene because it gives them important information

such as the date and the weather in the morning. One child also said that they listen to the radio for information on their interests; this learner enjoys rugby and he narrated a story about his older brother calling in to Mdantsane FM, a local radio station in East London to ask about rugby. A few children also mentioned that they listen to faith-based shows.

3.7.3 Content and format

When asked how Nal'ibali can improve its content, a large proportion of respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the Nal'ibali resources. One thing that can be considered by Nal'ibali regarding the suitability of their stories is length for specific audiences, as mentioned by both parents and reading club leaders. Reading club leaders in both the Eastern Cape and Gauteng noted that children often get tired because of the long stories. They mitigate this by breaking the story up and reading different sections on different days. In one reading club, the reading club leader mentioned that young children struggle to keep up with long stories:

> *I prefer that they be shortened. Children have a short concentration span so once you read something long for them then maybe they lose interest quickly. - Site3RCLI*

Parents also weighed in noting,

> *I font bangayi improver. Maybe make it a bigger font. And then some of the stories ne mhlawumbi abantwana abakho kwi reading level eyi one ne, so some of the stories are too long, going back to lanto ye attention span. Xa ubafundela wena ngokwakho, xa siside kakhulu you end up losing them uyabo? (They can improve the font, maybe make it a bigger font. And then some of the stories maybe the children are in the reading club level one, so some of the stories are too long – going back to that thing of the attention span. When you read to them yourself, when the story is too long you end up losing them you see) - Site3PFG0609*

And

> *'Erh… mna ndizokuthethela owam umntwana ke ne. Owam kwade kwathiwa makayo funa ispecs because unegxaki na mehlo. Abanye ke umhlawumbi omnye akazobanayo imali for uyofuna ispecs atleast lamagama ngaske ingathi ayabonakala because omnye umntwana uyakwazi ukuyi thatha incwadi athi, ayisondeze apha kuye. Abe angaboni kakuhle ngoku lamagama noko aku medium size uyayibona. Ngaske noko lamagama abe kubonakala, nditsho awam kunzima ukufunda elagama lipha kufuneka asondele. Because unegxaki na mehlo. (I am going to speak for my own child. My child was even told to go get glasses because they have a problem with their eyes. Maybe some will have a problem of not having enough money to get glasses. At least if the words could be bigger some children take the book and bring it very close to their eyes because they cannot see the words properly. The words are on medium size you see. I wish the words could be bigger) - Site2PFG1012*

In terms of other aspects that Nal'ibali can improve on, one reading club leader noted that errors in the supplements could be improved.

There are some… I don't know if I should call them misprints or what. I wish they could start by looking at the supplement. - Site3RCLI

One parent also mentioned that they would like to see videos of the short stories. This would serve the same function as books for their child and those who mostly learn through visuals. Children may also concentrate better when watching a video. The parent mentioned that this is not to replace reading, but could be an additional option to supplement reading.

The main areas that parents would like their children to read about are real-life situations. These include serious topics such as bullying, racism, abuse and drugs and lighter topics such as diversity, knowing their provinces and understanding their bodies. Parents also indicated that stories that contain lessons are important. The Bible/religious studies is another area of preference that came out strongly. A few parents also mentioned funny stories, stories about animals and fantasy stories that stimulate children's imagination.

The quotes below provide examples of the stories parents would like to see made available for their children:

'Like I future yabo, uyayibona. Like into ezakuba guider uyayibona. Bayazi into yokubana bakwesa stage. Xa ndilapha kwesi stage, uyayibona as ba bekhula just uba vula ingqondo. (Like their future you see. Something that is going to guide them you see. So that they know when I am at this stage and this stage. You see as they grow it opens up their minds) - Site1PFG05	*'Ne zitori ze religion I would support them, because umntwana might not be too excited for iBible. But once there is a story, umhlawumbi with pictures and everything ethetha nge religion. That might be exciting for them.* *And stories about religion I would support them, because a child might not be too excited for the Bible but once there is a story, maybe with pictures and everything that discusses religion, that might be exciting for them. - Site3PFG0609*
'Maybe they can read I stories about I body changes. Yoba what happens xa ukwi age ethile. Maybe they can read stories about body changes. About what happens when you are at a certain age - Site3PFG0609	*'I think nencwadi ezieducate-a nge provinces, and then places abanokuzi explorer xaumntuethewayakulo province. To see different places kwindawoahlalakuyo.* *I think books also educate about provinces, and then places that they can explore when someone goes to that province. To see different places where you stay - Site3PFG0609*
Mna ndifuna bafunde ngayo yonke into eqhubekayo apha emhlabeni. Umzekelo akekho ebholeni. Mhlawumbi uya hlukunyezwa ngomnye, funeka	*We will like to be more like on diversity and characters of people, you see, because that will allow them also to know that not everyone lives according to their*

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ayazi yintoni I abuse u abuzeka xana ku theni, uyayi qonda . Lento uba uzomfundisa nge sport, okanye ngantoni okanye ngantoni, makayazi indlela eku philwa ngayo. Omnye uphila ngolu hlobo omnye uphila ngolu hlobo, uyayi qonda.

I want them to read about everything that is happening in the world. For example they are being abused by someone, they must know what abuse is. You can teach them about sport, or this and that. They must know the way of living, that some people live like this and others live like that - Site2PFG1012

region. Because us we know the Muslims, they pray on Fridays like, you see, the kids won't, know as they grow up that no one, like, we don't live the same life as people. As a kid you might grown up, maybe at the home you believe in such a religion, then the kid's won't grow up, they want another religion, you see? So at least if they know about the diversity, they will also know that they are going to a different religion that believes in different things from the one that they learn at home - Site5PFG

Ndiya ndinayo, ndiyabawela. Because elibali labantu abahlukumezwayo. U Nal'ibali andika dibani nento ene bullism phakathi ingaske angayishiyi ngaphandle indaba ye bullism yabantwana because into ye bullism ngoku ingathi izama ubayi fashion. Ingaske bathi besebancinci, umntwana angabinalanto hayi uba ndithethile kuzakuthi. Ayazi uba ndithethile akhonto izakwenzeka. Uyabona amabali anjalo. Ubandithethile akhonto izokwenzeka akhomntu uzondibulala, akhomntu uzokuthina. Le situation siphila kuyo ngoku ingaske kubekho amabali anjalo. Kuba la bendiwafunda awongaka Nal'ibali. Ngawe zinye imbali, abanye ababhali qha kuba ubona intobana noko elibali, lingasebenza.

But the story of people being abused – I haven't seen Nal'ibali write anything about bullying of children. This thing of bullying seems to be becoming a fashion now. I wish there could be something where a child knows that they are free to voice themselves out without worrying

For now, for now, I think we are living in another world. To teach things that are really in life happening, it's a good thing. I think I will go with that one. Natural stories. I prefer it as being human beings, so that they can also learn that if maybe you do good things… You'll end up like that. The things you must do and what ways you must follow. But if you did bad things, what are the consequences that you faced. Rather than animals, because they might take it in their language that ah, we don't live as animals. So they won't get a lesson there. In terms of living. The story must be a life story. Boys and girls are the last thing to worry about. We don't have to worry, my child didn't have to worry about boys and girls, their last thing in your priority or whatever. You must, you mustn't worry about boys and girls. Because yeah, you are not married now, yes, when time is right, you do talk about boys and girls, when you do this, if you're a girl, when you do this, you're going to face things like this, wena i boy. You tell the true story. Yes. And a person just

about something happening to them, without being worried about being killed or something like that. This situation that we are living in now I wish there could be stories like that. Because the ones that I was reading (about bullying) were not Nal'ibali stories, they were from other writers. It's just that I thought that they could work (for the reading club) - Site2RCLI	*became to be a true person. I mean, she or he can know that when I'm speaking the truth I must be like this, how to pronounce the truth and when you, when you're talking about the truth, you must be honest, first, with yourself. - Site5PFG*

3.7.4   Summary

In summary, the qualitative data highlights potential gaps and offers valuable recommendations for Nal'ibali's distribution and content strategies. Distribution challenges include the dysfunction of post offices and difficulties with courier services in certain areas, posing obstacles to reaching audiences effectively. Partnerships with libraries and increased utilisation of digital platforms like the Moya app and WhatsApp are promising, yet hindered by data and network challenges in rural areas. Addressing capacity issues and administrative burdens for staff on the ground is crucial to enhance distribution reach. Content-wise, respondents generally expressed satisfaction with Nal'ibali resources, with some suggestions for improvement. Shortening story lengths to accommodate younger readers' attention spans, enhancing font size, and addressing misprints are potential enhancements. Diversifying content to include real-life topics, diverse characters, and lessons resonating with children's experiences is crucial. Furthermore, increasing accessibility across multiple languages and engaging parents and caregivers in reading initiatives are essential steps to foster a culture of reading and effectively meet the needs of Nal'ibali's target audience. Television and radio offer engagement opportunities, but libraries should not be overlooked, as collaborations could assist to bolster accessibility.

Discussion, Conclusions and Recommendations

4   Discussion, Conclusions and Recommendations

The research set out to answer a number of key questions, including:

- Wht are Parents' and children's perspectives on reading? What would Nal'ibali's target audience like to read? Where would they like to source the material? And what are their language preferences?
- What is the profile of Nal'ibali's existing story repository in terms of length, themes, and language complexity?
- How well is Nal'ibali meeting market needs? This assessment should consider the costs of production and the potential reach for various materials.

- What are potential gaps and recommendations to increase uptake of Nal'ibali materials via changes to provisioning strategy, delivery platforms, delivery formats, and/or delivery content, with regards to each age group and designed to scale?

This section discusses the main findings of the combined strands of research in order to provide insights and answers to these key questions, as well as present any other incidental findings that may be of interest to Nal'ibali as it plans its future delivery.

4.1   Participant opinions about reading

All children indicated that they like reading in general, enjoying a combination of books in isiXhosa, isiZulu, Sesotho and English (with isiXhosa being the predominant language in the Eastern Cape and isiZulu and Sesotho for Gauteng, with English being prevalent in all, respectively). Parents advocated for the importance of having a grounding in one's home language before gaining an understanding of English as a widespread global language.

While there was no consensus to be found on the genre of story most enjoyed, there were a number of overarching reasons children found to read. These included: improving their language skills, broadening their horizons, curbing boredom, helping to unwind and learning about real-life situations. To expand on this latter point, the children also greatly enjoyed the lessons learned from the stories. The excitement generated by the content of these stories was so great that many would memorise them and retell them when they had the chance, such as during the focus group interviews. The content referred to here also includes pictures, as many older children in the 0-5 year age-group were able to provide their own narration for the pictures in the books, and such narration could also involve acting the story out. This is a developmentally appropriate use of the books for this age group, and it was encouraging to see how well these young children engaged with the books, in spite of the text being at a difficulty level above their developmental stage (only one story was rated as 'Grade R' in English when analysed using a standard textual difficulty formula). The majority of children enjoyed reading both at home and at the reading clubs.

There are three stories that children appeared to enjoy across different sites in the two provinces. These are 'Asanda's Friend', 'The Tale of Floating Zimkhitha', and 'usuku luka Bhuti Mvundla'. There do not appear to be large differences in the types of books that Foundation Phase and Intermediate Phase children enjoy. ECD children selected picture books as their favourite stories, and this was also confirmed in the parent focus groups. It is unclear whether thes findings are due to the limited number of books available in reading clubs and schools.

Regarding parents, they cited a number of benefits of reading for themselves and their children, including improving language skills, learning life lessons, bonding between the children and parents, and improvement of other skills such as drawing (with many other activities also being learned at the Nal'ibali reading clubs, such as singing, playing and doing shows). This indicates that parents are aware of the importance of reading, and even of some of the socio-emotional benefits of reading. This is a positive step towards creating a reading culture. For the parents, time was a major barrier regarding reading for themselves and to their children, but because they acknowledged the importance of as well as their children's interest in reading, they would find the time to read with and to them.

4.2 Market preferences and the Nal'ibali repository profile

The highest number of stories in the repository are in English (214), with the fewest in Tshivenda (93). Sepedi has the longest average sentence and story length, while isiZulu has the lowest average sentence length and word count, but the highest average number of syllables per word, as expected given the orthographic profiles of these languages (any other finding would have been concerning). Most stories in the repository were found to have simple text suitable for children aged 7-11 years. Some stories were also suitable for younger children, while a few were more challenging and suitable for early teens[17].

The WhatsApp survey and the qualitative engagements revealed an interest in reading animal stories and funny stories. In the WhatsApp survey, other popular choices included stories with life lessons, fantasy stories, feel-good stories, and traditional tales, with less preference expressed for real-life stories. However, the children included in the qualitative research liked real-life stories, while fewer children liked fantasy stories and listening to traditional tales. An important caveat, though, is that girls did enjoy fantasy stories more than boys.

The desktop audit showed that most stories In the repository are light-hearted and contain animal characters. There are fewer traditional tales and fantasy stories available in the repository in proportion to the preferences indicated by respondents in the WhatsApp survey, but this is aligned to the preferences of the children included in the focus groups.

Interviews and focus group discussions illustrated that children enjoy reading stories and most children have opportunities for reading at home, at school and at reading clubs. Children enjoy reading for a number of reasons, which include learning about real-life situations, improving language skills, curbing boredom and broadening their horizons. In all sites across both provinces, children enjoy a combination of books in isiXhosa, isiZulu, Sesotho and English. Children mainly enjoy the life lessons taught through the stories. They love their favourite story content and retell the story any chance that they get.

When asked how Nal'ibali can improve its content, a large proportion of respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the Nal'ibali resources overall; however the suitability of the length of stories and the size of the text for specific audiences is something that needs to be looked into, as mentioned by both parents and reading club leaders. Additionally, it was felt by some parents that some important topics (such as first-aid and bullying) were not sufficiently covered in the materials. Additionally, broader subject matter was cited as being needed (in terms of expanding the scope of ethnic and religious character backgrounds), as well as more variety in story delivery (using short videos, for example).

4.2.1 Recommendations regarding aligning market preferences and story profiles

Reintroduce story creation into the Nal'ibali portfolio. Although Nal'ibali has moved away from story creation in its strategy, it seems there is both a general enjoyment of Nal'ibali resources and a call for the creation of more and more varied stories, particularly with more diverse characters. A recommendation would be to potentially dedicate some resources towards exploring new niches and creating stories to fill them.

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[17] Note that picture books were not included the analysis of the existing repository, but children in the 0-5 age range were observed with picture books or simple stories that were used as picture books.

Market testing pre- or post-publication. If stories are created, pre-publication market tests could help to ensure that they are aligned to market interests and needs.

Expand the pool of authors for Nal'ibali stories. Nal'ibali does put out general calls for stories which allow a broad range of people to participate, and there is no evidence that the curation of stories is heavily biased in any direction. However, perhaps targeted efforts need to be made towards diverse representation in the Nal'ibali stories.

Implement a feedback loop on stories (particularly those downloaded) for ongoing data collection. Data collection methods such as the WhatsApp survey used could be integrated into systems so that a random selection of downloads prompts participation in a short survey. This would allow Nal'ibali to gather important feedback on a regular basis.

Continue to update the Nal'ibali dataset with new stories as they are added. The existing dataset is an excellent start. Going forward, the dataset should focus on standardisation and layout so that analysis can be automated and feedback gathered regularly.

Create more stories for younger children. A gap in story provision seems to be single-word and simple readers geared towards Grade R and preschool, although, as noted, picture books were not evaluated.

Consider more stories and types of stories for middle grade children. The Nal'ibali database predominantly includes stories suited for children up to Grade 3, with very few stories especially for children in Grade 5-8. Nal'ibali may wish to consider reading campaigns targeted specifically to children in middle grades in order to continuously build a generation of readers, as well as introduce a higher complexity of language naturally into children's lexicons through exposure. A caution is that increasing the length of a story does not naturally increase its complexity, and writers with expertise in the middle grades may specifically be sought in order to write texts with appropriate language for these age ranges – and for some languages, this may be a 'work in progress' situation, for example, if there are not many home-language writers of early chapter books. Another potential direction for expansion is into early chapter books in African languages, but given the poor response of the market to the idea of purchasing books, the heavy focus on English reading and poverty constraints, this is likely only feasible as a donor or government-funded initiative. Advocacy would be necessary.

4.3   Representation of family, gender and setting in Nal'ibali

Overall, the representation of the two genders is largely balanced, especially considering that it was not explicitly constructed to be so. However, it is significant that there are many more mentions of boys than girls in the corpus – there may be a need for more stories focused on the female experience and/or female protagonists.

Stories tend to focus on a single parent and child relationship, or relationships between children, without too much representation of healthy adult relationships. In part, this is explained by the focus on children as the main characters, which is seen as appropriate given the target audience. However, there is still room to create more complex settings and character dynamics. Where they exist, the relationships between the subsidiary characters (particularly adults) are not well-defined.

One other consideration Nal'ibali should take forward is its representation of school. While the library, storybooks and reading in general are portrayed as positive, fun past-times, school is largely generalised as a place of inaction (characters travel to or from school without much action happening at school) or, in some

cases, a place with negative experiences (bullying, etc). Some participants requested that more stories deal with these sorts of school-based issues, but a good approach would be to balance them in the Nal'ibali story corpus with more positive stories that take place in school settings.

4.3.1 Recommendations regarding aligning language and delivery to preferences

Make conscientious decisions about gender representation in Nal'ibali stories, with attention to action (e.g., whether the character acts or is acted upon) and emotion. As noted in the analysis, Nal'ibali is fairly well balanced in terms of the representation of girls and boys, with the caveat that girls are included in the corpus at less than half the rate of boys. More stories focused on girls could be beneficial to balance the corpus a bit more, particularly if girls are 'actors' and achieve change or growth in the stories.

Take a conscientious decision about representations of family aligned to Nal'ibali values. There is a call for more diversity among characters in Nal'ibali, and this may extend to greater complexity in family relationships. For example, stories may focus more on extended families living under the same roof, or include more relationships between adults – currently, the majority of stories focus on a single parent (more often the mother, but sometimes the father) and the child. Additionally, the issue of LGBTQ+ representation and different family structures should be carefully considered within Nal'ibali and with its stakeholders.

Take action to represent school and learning more positively. Nal'ibali may be working at cross-purposes with itself if its theory of change is focused in part on scholastic achievement, but its stories do not actively promote engagement in learning at school.

4.4 Language and delivery preferences and costs

The survey indicated that the target audience preferred receiving stories via WhatsApp, with 90.4% of respondents expressing their preference for this medium. The majority of respondents reported receiving Nal'ibali reading resources on a weekly or monthly basis. The majority of respondents indicated a preference for reading stories in English or Afrikaans, closely followed by isiZulu. Other languages were selected mostly as 3rd or 4th choices.

All the reading clubs evaluated operate in either isiXhosa, isiZulu or Sesotho, the reason being that these are the local languages spoken in those areas visited. The materials used in these reading clubs are also mainly in these languages. Reading club leaders and children all confirmed that there are enough materials in their relevant home languages, although children in Gauteng requested more English language resources. In the Eastern Cape, although isiXhosa is mainly used, there do not appear to be any challenges in accessing English story materials. Reading clubs mainly use Nal'ibali materials, including the supplement, read-aloud collection, WhatsApp and audio stories.

The evaluation focused mostly on SEF-based sites that receive Nal'ibali materials through provincial coordinators or courier services. The most accessible and affordable distribution method is the post office, but some areas have seen post office closures or vandalism. Direct delivery via courier is convenient but costly and unsustainable for Nal'ibali. In the Eastern Cape, courier services are hindered by distance and road conditions. Reading materials from Nal'ibali are crucial in this region due to limited access to functional libraries. While partners are encouraged to use the website and WhatsApp for more resources, challenges with data and network availability in rural areas limit access. The Moya app also offers Nal'ibali materials, though it's not widely known

In both provinces, the provincial coordinators play an important role in delivering Nal'ibali materials to areas where the post office or courier is not accessible; however, capacity issues and a heavy administrative load for staff on the ground contribute to staff not being able to reach as many areas as they would like to for delivery of materials. In areas where there is an SEF coordinator, communities are mostly guaranteed to receive materials as they know that the literacy facilitator in the area comes twice a week and ensures that the group receives their expected number of books and that the reading clubs also receive their expected number of books. Sites in Gauteng are also making use of libraries and promoting library use. Currently, over 200 community members and Nal'ibali staff in Gauteng have signed up for library cards. Some reading clubs supplement materials with their own books and books from local libraries.

In the WhatsApp survey, the most commonly mentioned reading materials used by respondents to read to children were books from libraries, books from bookstores, websites or website content, newspapers and magazines. Aming the WhatsApp survey respondents, 90% indicated that they get stories from WhatsApp, with 46% indicating they access stories through this medium weekly or monthly. However, a like percentage accesses stories less than once a month.

It was shown that, generally, parents do not buy books, with the reasons being related to financial constraints, as many of the parents do not have stable jobs. As a result, many parents preferred downloading books online. Additionally, many saw Nal'ibali as a source of books, for their children at least. Many children indicated that they would like to receive books as gifts, although not necessarily for the special days of Christmas or birthdays. When asked which books they would buy, children listed a range of topics including funny stories, colouring books, stories about animals, books about Cocomelon, books about traditional tales, books on decor so they can plan their birthday parties. It is important to note that some children are satisfied with the books that they have access to through school and reading clubs and would buy their own copies of these. Children also make use of libraries and books brought home by their siblings.

4.4.1   Recommendations regarding aligning language and delivery to preferences

Invest in radio stories, which get the largest reach per rand. Radio stories reach the largest audience and cost less than TV stories to produce. Radio stories incur a unit cost of R0.0056 per listener, while TV stories incur a slightly higher unit cost of R0.0078 per viewer. On the other hand, WhatsApp and website stories show cost advantages by using existing production resources without incurring additional printing and distribution costs. This is an area of potential further investment. In addition, the strong response to the WhatsApp survey in terms of numbers as well as the statistics about usage are encouraging. WhatsApp and radio have a similar profile in terms of cost for reach. (One out-of-the-box suggestion to push towards building a reading culture is to ask or even incentivise popular television shows to include a scene with an adult reading to a child, or talking to another adult about the importance of reading, or even refer to Nal'ibali.

Partnerships for delivery. Excluding the cost of staffing, distribution via special projects forms one of the most cost-effective methods of delivery for supplements. However, this also constitutes the smallest portion of distribution efforts. A concerted effort to grow this aspect of the organisation and a distribution network of special projects may yield results (for example, targeting NGOs with implementation projects, or university students embarking on internships). Distribution via partners is slightly more expensive than distribution via the post office (R0.05 per unit), but the cost can add up over the long term.

Partner with schools as distribution sites. It is not sustainable for Provincial Coordinators to fill in the delivery gaps caused by post office dysfunctionality. Schools may offer alternative distribution sites that could be

explored. An advantage to schools over business partners such as supermarkets is that school staff may utilise the resources and also act as champions if their buy-in is secured.

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Appendix A: Detailed qualitative findings of site visits

This section presents detailed findings from each site, including parents, children's, and reading club leaders' views related to the importance of reading, preferences for reading materials, suggestions for improving existing resources, and the use and significance of different languages.

Site 1

An ECD Centre had two Nal'ibali read aloud story collections in both isiXhosa and English languages, different supplements in English and isiXhosa languages, the world read aloud day materials, the children's literacy rights poster, and there was also a guide to reading for enjoyment titled story power. The books were in good condition, however the poster was torn with some literacy right number 7 torn off the poster and the poster, was not mounted on the walls.

When asked about the importance of reading, one parent indicated that they enjoy reading. They also believe that it is important to read for children and that children love the pictures in the stories.

> *Ewe, siyakuthanda ukufunda thina singabazali. Ngoba ukufunda kubalulekile, and abantwana xa ubafundela ibali bayakwazi mamela bayawathanda amabali. And eskakhulu bathanda iipictures emabalini. Nesistori uthetha ngaso umane uveza ipicture, uyabona ngu mvundla kelo, umvundla wabaleka wathi. Bayayithanda thanda lanto yomane uba bonisa. Ewe mama. (Yes, we like reading as parents. Because reading is important, and when you read a story) – Site1PFG05*

Another parent also indicated that they enjoy reading but do not have time to do so.

> *Ewe mama ndiyakuthanda ukufunda kuba kaloku imfundo ibalulekile. Nokufunda oku kubalulekile khona ukuze ubenezinto ozaziyo. Ezinye izinto ubunga zazi uzifumana apha ekufundeni, umzekelo ufunde ibali. Nangona nje ndingafuni nokuphosisa, mna andina chance kakhulu yokufunda amabali. (Yes I like reading because reading is important. Reading is important to ensure that you are knowledgeable about things. Some things that you did not know, you learn about them through reading, for example through reading a story. But I don't want to lie, I don't really get a chance to read stories.)- Site1PFG05*

Parents also believe that reading is important because of the lessons you learn and because it opens up your mind.

> *Kaloku xa ufundayo uye umzekelo ufunde elobali u, uye ufunde nawe ufunde. Umzekelo, uyazi uba le into ibalulekile uba ndiyenze le, ibalulekile ayibalulekanga uba ndiyenze apha ebomini.*
>
> *Ukufunda kutyhila ingqondo. Umzekelo andithi kutyhila ingqondo umzekelo, uye uthi ngoku ufundayo ubone uba apha esi isitori sikufundisa ukuba, lona umntu ungumntu olungileyo. Lona umntu ungumntu o wrong. Like nala athetha ngezilwanyana amabali. Umzekelo kwakukho isilwanyana ekwakuthiwa si clever kakhulu kudala, udyakalashe. So, udyakalashe yayingoyena u baileryo ezintweni zonke. So, ufunde oh, funeka ube nobulumko buka dyakalashe, into ezinjalo. - Site1PFG05*

Another parent believes that it is important to read to children because it opens up their minds. Through reading, they are able to differentiate between right and wrong.

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Kubaluleke kakhulu ukufundela abantwana izitori ngoba kaloku, baye ubafunde ukumamela pha okokuqala. Ukumamela babone kengoku uba le into akufunekanga siyenze. Umzekelo be bekhe ndaba fundela ibali lika tamkhulu owaye godola , wahamba emahlathini, wachola inyoka wayisizela. Uba lenyoka iyagodola wayifaka empokothweni, yajika yamluma kengoku inyoka. Uyabona kengoku, ubafundela into yokuba uyakwazi uba nosizi kanti lento izakwenzakalisa, uyisizele into kanti izakwenzakalisa, ewe into ezinjalo - Site1PFG05

When asked what kind of stories they would like their children to read about, parents mentioned:

Like I future yabo, uyayibona. Like into ezakuba guider uyayibona. Bayazi into yokubana bakwesa stage. Xa ndilapha kwesi stage, uyayibona as ba bekhula just uba vula ingqondo. (Like their future you see. Something that is going to guide them you see. So that they know when I am at this stage and this stage. You see as they grow it opens up their minds) - Site1PFG05

Site 2

In this reading club they use mostly isiXhosa. The reading club leader explained that this is because the children in the reading club speaks isixhosa as their home language and go to local schools in the township which use isiXhosa. The reading club t use Nal'ibali materials including the supplements and the collections. The reading club leader also has a few other books of their own that they use during some of the sessions. The leader also uses audio materials for their reading club and has directed parents to the website where they can get relevant reading materials. They haveaccess to isiXhosa books. This is done through Nal'ibali, but children are allowed to bring books that they like from home or school and ask the reading club leader to read them during the sessions.

The Nal'ibali materials get delivered via courier to their location, and they all collect them from the same location. This method works for the reading club leader as they do not have to travel far to get their materials. The courier method is quick and ensures that the materials arrive safely.

During their preparation time, the reading club leader considers a number of factors when selecting books for the reading club sessions. They try to connect the story content to real-life situations

Xa ndinela xesha lam liba mandi preparishe. Ndijonge, ndijonge, ndijonge, ndiqonde imeko ngoku ndiyakwazi ndijonga ezi ndabeni. Oh imeko ngoku, indaba bezisithi, khame khendi jonge apha e balini kwezi collections. Akhonto ezibangela into ubana xa bebalisa nge ndaba e TVini bathi umzekelo, then si driveke si drive lelabali. Lisikhuthaze into yokuba masifunde uziqiqosha, masifunde ungahambi esithubeni kuba ngoku abantwana bayabiwa. But when I have my preparation time I look and look and I look at the situation and am able to look at the news to say oh the situation is like this or the news were saying this. Let me look at the story collections to see if there is anything that will allow them to talk about what was happening on TV for example, then we use that to drive the story. The story will maybe encourage us to take care of ourselves, not to walk around in the middle of nowhere because children are being abducted now, children are being killed. – Site2RCLI

Site 2: Age 6 – 9

In site 2, children aged between 6 - 9 years indicated that they enjoy reading stories from all categories

The children enjoy reading stories at home and at school. At home their favourite stories to read are 'Usuku luka bhuti mvundla', 'Umhlobo ka Asanda', and 'The tale of floating Zimkhitha'. Two of the children enjoy the stories because they are funny and make them laugh while one child enjoys the content of the story. At school, the children like the stories 'Sibabalwe usesibhedlele', 'Inenekazi lodumo' and 'Umhlobo ka Asanda'. All the children enjoy the content of the story. Additionally, one child mentioned that they read a book called Thami, a book about a boy who did not want to brush their teeth, at school and they wish that they could also read it at the reading club. At the reading club the children like 'Usuku luka bhuti mvundla', and 'The old woman and her pig'. The 'Old woman and her pig' is a popular story at the reading club as it is one of the main stories that they often act out together as a group.

Site 2: Age 10 – 12

The three children aged between 10 - 12 years in Site 2, indicated that they enjoy reading stories. Although all three enjoy reading real-life stories, traditional tales, funny stories, fantasy stories only two indicated that they also enjoy reading animal stories.

The three children indicated that they read both story books and school books at home and at school. Their favourite stories at home are Nal'ibali stories which they were given at the reading club. The other stories they enjoy reading are, 'uSuku luka bhuti Mvundla oludikayo', 'uDadana ombi' and 'Why the birds fly at night'.

Two out of three children stated that they enjoy reading the 'Sibabalwe usesibhedlela' from isiXhosa home language and 'Lulu' in the English FAL respectively. They also mention that they read their school books across all subjects. The children indicated that they enjoy reading the stories they read at school, home and reading club and prove to be more interested in the content of the story. They know how to retell the stories in their own words, they are also able to take out lessons from each story to apply in their own life.

In this site, parents believe that reading is important for the following reasons: *The reason I like for my child to read, or to be read to by someone else is because it relieves their mind. When they are at school they do many subjects. Then the child has a full day, and then they get to school around seven. Children don't come home early, at around seven you are able to take out a book and read, or they take a book and you read for them. My child is read to by their older brother. Their brother reads for them and I can see that their mind is opening up. My child was not interested in books before, I don't want to lie to you. They did not like books. They didn't even like school. But now because they are in this Nal'ibali program, they have interest. When they read for themselves it's like they don't quite understand. When someone else is reading for them, like an older person, you know that they will explain the relevant parts, for example 'the dog barked'. The child won't read it that way, it must be read to them by an older person. They will read it as a child would. But when another person reads for you, you are able to visualise things as if they are really happening. So that's why I like reading, because it opens up the child's mind – Site2PFG1012*

Parents at this site suggested the following improvementsto Nal'ibali materials

> '*Erh… mna ndizokuthethela owam umntwana ke ne. Owam kwade kwathiwa makayo funa ispecs because unegxaki na mehlo. Abanye ke umhlawumbi omnye akazobanayo imali for uyofuna ispecs*

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atleast lamagama ngaske ingathi ayabonakala because omnye umntwana uyakwazi ukuyi thatha incwadi athi, ayisondeze apha kuye. Abe angaboni kakuhle ngoku lamagama noko aku medium size uyayibona. Ngaske noko lamagama abe kubonakala, nditsho awam kunzima ukufunda elagama lipha kufuneka asondele. Because unegxaki na mehlo. (I am going to speak for my own child. My child was even told to go get glasses because they have a problem with their eyes. Maybe some will have a problem of not having enough money to get glasses. At least if the words could be bigger some children take the book and bring it very close to their eyes because they cannot see the words properly. The words are on medium size you see. I wish the words could be bigger) - Site2PFG1012

When asked about what kind of stories parents would like their children to read about, parents on this site noted

Mna ndifuna bafunde ngayo yonke into eqhubekayo apha emhlabeni. Umzekelo akekho ebholeni. Mhlawumbi uya hlukunyezwa ngomnye, funeka ayazi yintoni I abuse u abuzeka xana ku theni, uyayi qonda . Lento uba uzomfundisa nge sport, okanye ngantoni okanye ngantoni, makayazi indlela eku philwa ngayo. Omnye uphila ngolu hlobo omnye uphila ngolu hlobo, uyayi qonda.

I want them to read about everything that is happening in the world. For example they are being abused by someone, they must know what abuse is. You can teach them about sport, or this and that. They must know the way of living, that some people live like this and tohers live like that - Site2PFG1012

Another parent requested first aid resources

'Abanokwazi u adda mhlawumbi into ye first aid. Umzekelo uyarhaxwa kwi swimming pool loluphi uncedo loku qala anolenza uyayiqonda. (Could they maybe add something about first aid? For example, you are drowning in a swimming pool, what help can you get first?) - Site2PFG1012

While the reading club leader requested resources linked to bullying

Ndiya ndinayo, ndiyabawela. Because elibali labantu abahlukumezwayo. U Nal'ibali andika dibani nento ene bullism phakathi ingaske angayishiyi ngaphandle indaba ye bullism yabantwana because into ye bullism ngoku ingathi izama ubayi fashion. Ingaske bathi besebancinci, umntwana angabinalanto hayi uba ndithethile kuzakuthi. Ayazi uba ndithethile akhonto izakwenzeka. Uyabona amabali anjalo. Ubandithethile akhonto izokwenzeka akhomntu uzondibulala, akhomntu uzokuthina. Le situation siphila kuyo ngoku ingaske kubekho amabali anjalo. Kuba la bendiwafunda awongaka Nal'ibali. Ngawe zinye imbali, abanye ababhali qha kuba ubona intobana noko elibali, lingasebenza.

But the story of people being abused – I haven't seen Nal'ibali write anything about bullying of children. This thing of bullying seems to be becoming a fashion now. I wish there could be something where a child knows that they are free to voice themselves out without worrying about something happening to them, without being worried about being killed or something like that. This situation that we are living in now I wish there could be stories like that. Because the ones that I was reading (about bullying) were not Nal'ibali stories, they were from other writers. It's just that I thought that they could work (for the reading club) - Site2RCLI

Site 3

The stories that are available in this classroom's reading corner are in isiXhosa as this is the home language of the children. Bacause this is a school, children have access to reading material provided by governmentThe materials that are available for reading in the classroom vary. Other story books as well as Nal'ibali supplement are available.

Site 3: Age 6 – 9

In the Eastern Cape, children aged between 6 - 9 years indicated that they enjoy reading stories, particularly about animals and funny stories. Boy learners do not seem to enjoy reading fantasy stories as much, but all girls indicated that they enjoy reading fantasy stories. All learners also enjoy listening to traditional tales.

Children indicated that they have access to isiXhosa books both at school and at home. The stories that children indicated that they like reading at home are 'UZinzi uphi ngoku?', 'Jabu', 'Yolisa' and 'Lizo and Liziwe'. One child also mentioned that they like a book about birds that are looking for a king but could not remember the name. All the children's favourite books to read at home were isiXhosa books. With the exception of one child all children indicated that they enjoy the stories that they read at school. Children's favourite stories at school were a combination of English and isiXhosa books. The books that children enjoy at school include; 'The Dog and the Jakkal', 'Dusty and Daisy', and "Mama Mabhena'.

When asked what they like about their favourite books at home, children mentioned that they just enjoy reading the stories. In the focus group, children retold the stories to the group to make everyone understand what they liked about the story. This shows that children enjoy the actual content of the story, they memorise it and retell it when they get a chance.

Site 3: 10 – 12

Two of the learners aged btween 10 - 12 years in Site 3, in the focus group indicated that they enjoy reading stories about animals, real-life stories, fantasy, and funny stories. Only one learner indicated that they enjoy listening to traditional tales.

Only one learner said that they read at home, with their favourite story being "uMama na bantwana". The child enjoy the story for the following reasons:

> *Ndithanda imfundiso yaso siyafundisa. Kuthiwa umntwana wayehamba no mama wakhe. Baleqwa zizilwanyana, umama yena wakhathalela umntwana*

> *I like the story's teaching. In the story a child was walking with their parent. They were chased by animals and the mother took care of the child.*

The children's favourite books at school are "Lazy Helena" and "Gustine the Giant". Both children mentioned that they like the content of the story and retold their favourite parts of the story which include when Gustine the Giant was eating and Lazy Helena got left behind by the bus.

In this site, parents believe that reading is important for the following reasons:

'I think mna nokuzifundela. Umntwana xa ezifundela yena yedwa, it increases nala confidence yokuma athethe infront of abantu. It increases I public speaking yakhe, akwazi ukuthetha infront of abantu, kuba eqhele ukufunda out loud.

I think even reading for yourself, when a child reads for themselves it increases that confidence of standing in front of people and talking. It increases their public speaking so that they are able to speak in front of people, because they are used to reading out loud – Site3PFG

Parents believe that it is important to be able to read in different languages.

Bendizakukuthi mna isiXhosa siya developer kubo, xangabana bemana beqhubekeka befunda. Lanto ibangela into yokuba, abantwana bangonqeni nobhala, bangonqeni no funda isiXhosa.

I would say that isiXhosa develops them as they continue reading. That allows them not to be lazy to write, not to be lazy to read in isiXhosa – Site3PFG

The advantage is that they will understand it, what they are reading about in our vernac. But really, in other languages, English, Afrikaans, for our kids, because they attend Zulu schools, Sotho schools, vernac schools, so for others, it will take time to understand if they start just reading English, so it's, for advantage for vernac, it's for them to understand what they're reading about. Understand, it's more understanding than reading in English. Yeah, but eventually, when they're reading vernac then, they go and reading English also, they will get there." Still prioritize English, 50-50, as is a common ground, but "in order to know the other language, you must know your language first. Start with yours, then the other.""When you read in English, you try to translate in vernac.""They write more English. But when they speak, when they communicate amongst themselves, it's our vernac.

I think naxana befunda nge English, it increases I vocabulary yabo. Because in most stories ezibhalwe nge English. Kubakhona amagama a highlightwa in black okanye in bold. Then ibekhona kengoku I meaning yawo, ecaleni ibene box yawo. So that umntwana azokuyazi ukuba elagama li highlightiweyo, okanye elagama li bold lithetha ukuthini, alifunda pha ecaleni.

I think even when they read in English, it increases their vocabulary. Because in most stories that are written in English there are some words that are highlighted in black or bold. Then their meaning is provided in a box next to the word so that the child can know what that highlighted or bold word means. – Site3PFG

So makafunda ngesiLungu is that ibanceda ngama subjects abawenzayo.

So learning in English helps them with the subjects that they are doing - Site3PFG

And kengoku umntwana okwazi ukufunda nge siXhosa qha, u limited kanti.
And a child that can read in isiXhosa only is limited. In terms of izifundo zakhe ne, as they get to higher grades bafunda nge English. And even let's say ubana mhlawumbi ufunde nge siXhosa sodwa. Maybe izinto ziye nzeka a drope out, ayo kufuna umsebenzi. Nowadays emisebenzini, it can be I domestic worker, it can be whatever. I instructions are in English, so… (In terms of their studies, as they get to higher grades they learn in English. And even let's say that maybe they only learn in isiXhosa – maybe

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they drop out and goes to look for work. Nowadays with jobs, it can be a domestic worker, it can be whatever, the instructions are in English so…) - Site3PFG

Parents noted that downloading books online is quicker because they use their phones regularly.

Sometimes I feel like it is much quicker, cause soloko sise zifownini. Mhlawumbi ndithi ndiyathanda ufunda mhlawumbi, like I want to be updated on the top stories, isefownini mos yonke lanto. (It is much easier. Sometimes I feel like it is much quicker, because we are always on the phone. Maybe let's say I like reading maybe, like I want to be updated on the top stories, all of that is on the phone. It is much easier.) - Site3PFG

Parents also believe that it is more cost effective to download books as explained by this parent.

I think it costs. When you order incwadi mos online kufuneka ubhatele I price yayo, ubhatele ubhatele for courier uyabona? So xa une data, you can easily download efownini. (I think it costs. When you order a book online you must pay its price and pay for the courier you see? So when you have data, you can easily download on your phone.)

Parents and the reading club leader provided the following suggestions on how Nal'ibali can improve its resources:

I font bangayi improver. Maybe make it a bigger font. And then some of the stories ne mhlawumbi abantwana abakho kwi reading level eyi one ne, so some of the stories are too long, going back to lanto ye attention span. Xa ubafundela wena ngokwakho, xa siside kakhulu you end up losing them uyabo? (They can improve the font, maybe make it a bigger font. And then some of the stories maybe the children are in the reading club level one, so some of the stories are too long – going back to that thing of the attention span. When you read to them yourself, when the story is too long you end up losing them you see) - Site3PFG0609

I prefer that they be shortened. Children have a short concentration span so once you read something long for them then maybe they lose interest quickly. - Site3RCLI

You read and read and then as you read and go to the next page and what you are reading does not make sense and doesn't link to what you were reading earlier. There are some… I don't know if I should call them misprints or what. I wish they could start by looking at the supplement. Because with some supplements you will start your preparation work but end up leaving it. You prepare something else even though in your heart you wanted to use the story in the supplement. And then there are some good stories in the supplement that really help us. In terms of what Nal'ibali can improve, for me it is still treating me well, I haven't noticed anything. I was happy about the training that they did for us when we started. And then this year they did a review to check where we are and whether we are losing focus or not. That means that Nal'ibali cares about us. - Site3RCLI

When asked about what kind of stories parents would like their children to read about, parents in this site noted:

I think they should read stories they can relate to. That is stories with content that is around them. Umzekelo, if there were more stories, alerting them about idrugs umzekelo.

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I think they should read stories they can relate to. That is stories with content that is around them. For example, if there were more stories, alerting them about drugs for example. - Site3PFG0609

'Maybe they can read I stories about I body changes. Yoba what happens xa ukwi age ethile.

Maybe they can read stories about body changes. About what happens when you are at a certain age - Site3PFG0609

'And then ndiyazithanda iincwadi zezi lwanyana, and princesses. Nazo ndizithandela uba they work on I imagination yabo.

And then I like books about animals and princesses. I like those because they work on their imagination - Site3PFG0609

'I think nencwadi ezieducate-a nge provinces, and then places abanokuzi explorer xaumntuethewayakulo province. To see different places kwindawoahlalakuyo.

I think books also educate about provinces, and then places that they can explore when someone goes to that province. To see different places where you stay - Site3PFG0609

'Ne zitori ze religion I would support them, because umntwana might not be too excited for iBible. But once there is a story, umhlawumbi with pictures and everything ethetha nge religion. That might be exciting for them.

And stories about religion I would support them, because a child might not be too excited for the Bible but once there is a story, maybe with pictures and everything that discusses religion, that might be exciting for them. - Site3PFG0609

Site 4

The reading club uses mostly isiZulu and Sesotho reading materials as these are the most commonly spoken languages in the area. The reading club leader uses the supplements and books supplied by Nal'ibali as well as the audio stories. The reading club leader also uses the local library as a resource for books for the reading club. The reading club leader indicated that the decision of which stories to read is a collaborative effort.

> *We take turns. Sometimes I choose like when I came to the library and I saw an interesting book - Site4RCLI*

The reading club leader also suggests that placing the materials in libraries would make it much easier for people to access since libraries are visible in communities. Libraries can have a section dedicated to Nal'ibali materials.

In this community, the alternative way for people to access reading materials outside of Nal'ibali is the library as the reading centre leader explains,

> *We recently made library cards for parents. So we had to ask them for the ID numbers and then the library will open ama library cards. So the parents or the children can able to come to the library and borrow books.*

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Site 4: Age 10 – 12 In Gauteng, all children aged between 10 – 12 years in Site 4, stated that they enjoy reading stories. They all enjoy reading funny stories, two enjoy reading traditional tales, one enjoy stories related to real-life events, one enjoyed reading fantasy stories and none of the children like stories about animals.

One of the three children read books at home. The title of the book is 'Into enhle kunazo Zonke' Two out of the three children indicated that they read at school while the other did not reflect on her reading activities at school. The favourite story the one child read at school is titled Lulu and the other child indicated that she likes reading DBE books. Children read for different reasons at school, one child likes to read DBE books at school to keep busy while teachers are in the meeting and the other enjoys the content of the stories as they can retell the story. One child mentioneds reading isiZulu stories only at the reading club while others mention reading isiZulu and the other mention reading Sesotho stories both at the reading club and at school. All the children stated that they like stories they read at the reading club, each one has their own favourite story title 'Ho betere', 'iPhupho lika Sipho' and 'Cha'.

In this site, one of the parents noted that being able to read in English is important because their children already speak and understands their mother tongue.

English. Because if the child is able to read English, he or she can even speak it better, so that even when he grows up, he'll be able to to speak with other people that speak other languages, because in vernac, we don't speak vernac at home, so that's when he or she will learn vernac, you don't even have to teach. But you understand, each and every time I'm speaking at home isiZulu, neh. Every time you're speaking Zulu, every time you're speaking Sotho, you must change, you can't read with a vernacular each and every time. You must change, at least sometimes put English, even to teach the language, you are right. - Site4PFG

Parents also noted the importance of reading to their children.

I prefer, like, to read for my kids so that I make them understand the book, then obviously, wherever they go they will have friends there and they will be having what, much better knowledge for them about the book and they'll be able to share that book with others, so that if those others ask him or her the questions that he not understand, he will come back to me, then that's when I'll explain again and again, that's when you can see the progresses of that, your child is learning from the book. - Site4PFG

Parents highlighted the benefits their children gain through Nal'ibali

At first, I didn't understand about Nal'ibali, when I saw them first, but the second time when they told me okay mum, we are going to the reading club, I said I also want to go, I just want to see what are you guys are doing there? I saw that they are enjoying the reading club very much and for the thing that they are playing around, by that time when is the reading club, you won't saw even a child in the street, because it's a reading time. - Site4PFG

Me on my side, like, the club is helping the kids because like, even the time for reading, is for me to teach them how to read, it becomes less, at least Nal'ibali is able to help them understand. So like, you don't have to explain more, because Nal'ibali is there, they now understand better, you only explain there and there, so they also limit time for me to be busy teaching them, how it helps. And makes you happy, like, seeing your child pointing a word on the TV and pronouncing it correctly. - Site4PFG

Site 5

This reading club uses mostly isiZulu and Sesotho reading materials as these are the most commonly spoken local languages. They use books and supplements supplied by Na'ibali. The reading club leader also makes use of the audio stories on WhatsApp.

Site 5: Age 0 – 5

When given a chance to pick the stories they like from the books in their classroom, all three children picked picture stories, with two children choosing one same storybook and one choosing their own unique story. The stories are titled "Wake up Mummy" with the character from Takalane Sesame and the other is titled "Getting dressed". The book titled "Wake up Munny " is written in three languages, English, isiZulu and Sesotho, the pictures and the book titled "Getting dressed" is written in Sesotho and English. The written text is only in the few first and last pages of the books and however the children were not interested in the written text. The children were much more fascinated by the characters, the two liked the character `Elmo" from the TV show Takalani Sesame which one reported seeing on TV. They were also fascinated about what they saw in the pictures and tried to tell their own narration of what they saw.

Site 5: Age 6 – 9

In a focus group discussion of 6 children three boys and three girls all stated that they read stories at home.

In Gauteng, children aged bwtween 6-9 years in site 5, indicated that they like funny stories, five stated that they like reading traditional tales, four children indicated that they enjoy reading stories about animals and real-life events and two stated that they like reading fantasy stories.

Two children referred to one story as their favourite story that they have read at home, titled 'uMngani ka Asanda'. Another child liked reading a book titled 'Thitjhere', while the boys like reading books titled 'Soccer ball', 'Messi' and 'Rugby'. All the children indicated that they like reading at school. Two children could not relate to any story they liked to read while the other three reflected stories from the English DBE book and the one child loved a Sesotho story about a teacher. The stories children like to read at school are "Letsatsi la tswalo" "Soccer ball", "Messi"and a story about teachers on a trip to see animals. The stories about Messi, Soccer ball and teachers on a trip to see animals are reported to be from the same English DBE book. Four out of six children have favourite stories in the reading club. Two children like the story 'ukuhambisana', another child likes the story 'Zimkhitha' while another child likes a colouring book. Children also like the story 'Icebo elikhulu lika ntuthwane omnacane' at the reading club.

Site 5: Age 10 – 12

All children aged between 0 - 12 years in site 5 indicated that they like reading stories about real-life and fantasy. While two of the learners like reading stories about animals and funny stories.

When asked whether they like to read at home, all the learners indicated that they do. Their favourite books to read at home are comic books in general, 'why do crocodiles live in the river' and 'isikhwama esine golide'. In terms of the books that they read at school, one learner mentioned that because they are in Grade 7, they do not read stories at school as they only use the DBE workbook for Maths. Another learner in Grade 6 also mentioned that they also use the DBE workbooks and don't have stories but that they like a story in the textbook called 'Jeff goes missing.' The last learner enjoys a book that they used to read at their previous

school called 'turtles are faster than rabbit'. When asked what they like about these stories, one learners retold the story indicating that they enjoy the content of the story while the other learner said that they like the lesson in that rabbits must not compare themselves with turtles. Other stories that children enjoy in the reading club include 'iPenti lika Zimkhitha', 'iPhupho lika Asanda' and 'Ukuhambisana'

Stories that children seem to enjoy across all provinces include 'Asanda's friend', 'the tale of floating Zimkhitha' and 'Usuku luka Bhuti Mvundla'.

Because It taught me ukuthi ungaqambi amanaga. And respect others. Inemininingwane eminingi. Ubhut' nogwaja wayengafuni ukua eskolweni, waqamba amanga kuGogo wathi uyile eskoleni kanti usisi wakhe bekayile maebuya bamnika ikhekhe so wafunda isfundo sakhe ukuthi angaphinde aqambe amanga. (Because it taught me not to tell lies. And respect others. It has many lessons. Nogwaja did not want to go to school, he lied to his grandmother and said that he went to school but his sister had actually gone to school and she got cake at school so he learnt a lesson that he must not lie again.) Site5CFG1012

Parents mentioned the following benefits of reading:

We have to read in order to learn things - Site5PFG05

Necessary conversation, it is important. Like I said, in order for them to gain knowledge, you have to know how to read, you have to read, understand? Even maybe for instance they went somewhere, then there's maybe the signs that, you're smoking here, so they learn something from that. If they know how to read, they'll understand what's that thing say: Don't stand here, there's danger here, they won't go there. Understand? So if they don't have a knowledge of reading, it's gonna bet hard for them to know, to experience all the things. - - Site5PFG05

Benefits of reading

Both parents and children mentioned a number of benefits of reading including language skills, learning life lessons, bonding between children and parents, improvement of other skills such as drawing.

One parent indicated that they like reading. They also believe that it is important to read for children and that children love the pictures in the stories

Ewe, siyakuthanda ukufunda thina singabazali. Ngoba ukufunda kubalulekile, and abantwana xa ubafundela ibali bayakwazi mamela bayawathanda amabali. And eskakhulu bathanda iipictures emabalini. Nesistori uthetha ngaso umane uveza ipicture, uyabona ngu mvundla kelo, umvundla wabaleka wathi. Bayayithanda thanda lanto yomane uba bonisa. Ewe mama. (Yes, we like reading as parents. Because reading is important, and when you read a story — Site1PFG05

Another parent also indicated that they like reading but said that they do not have time to read.

Ewe mama ndiyakuthanda ukufunda. Kuba kaloku imfundo ibalulekile. Nokufunda oku kubalulekile khona ukuze ubenezinto ozaziyo. Ezinye izinto ubunga zazi uzifumana apha ekufundeni, umzekelo

ufunde ibali. Nangona nje ndingafuni nokuphosisa, mna andina chance kakhulu yokufunda amabali. - Site1PFG05

Parents also believe that reading is important because of the lessons you learn and because it opens up your mind.

Kaloku xa ufundayo uye umzekelo ufunde elobali u, uye ufunde nawe ufunde. Umzekelo, uyazi uba le into ibalulekile uba ndiyenze le, ibalulekile ayibalulekanga uba ndiyenze apha ebomini.

Ukufunda kutyhila ingqondo. Umzekelo andithi kutyhila ingqondo umzekelo, uye uthi ngoku ufundayo ubone uba apha esi isitori sikufundisa ukuba, lona umntu ungumntu olungileyo. Lona umntu ungumntu o wrong. Like nala athetha ngezilwanyana amabali. Umzekelo kwakukho isilwanyana ekwakuthiwa si clever kakhulu kudala, udyakalashe. So, udyakalashe yayingoyena u baileryo ezintweni zonke. So, ufunde oh, funeka ube nobulumko buka dyakalashe, into ezinjalo. - Site1PFG05

I am going to say, it is important. Because it broadens their imagination. Iyamkhulisa marn yabo? Cause some things bafunda, they read I stories ezine morals ne. Umhlawumbi ufike la moral iphaya estorini wena ungumzali ubungeka…uyabona, ubungeka mxeleli ngayo beningekangqubani ne situation kumele u instile le moral. By going through books, ezinye izinto uzifunda pha.

'I think mna nokuzifundela. Umntwana xa ezifundela yena yedwa, it increases nala confidence yokuma athethe infront of abantu. It increases I public speaking yakhe, akwazi ukuthetha infront of abantu, kuba eqhele ukufunda out loud.

I think even reading for yourself, when a child reads for themselves it increases that confidence of standing in front of people and talking. It increases their public speaking so that they are able to speak in front of people, because they are used to reading out loud – Site3PFG

We have to read in order to learn things - Site5PFG05

Necessary conversation, it is important. Like I said, in order for them to gain knowledge, you have to know how to read, you have to read, understand? Even maybe for instance they went somewhere, then there's maybe the signs that, you're smoking here, so they learn something from that. If they know how to read, they'll understand what's that thing say: Don't stand here, there's danger here, they won't go there. Understand? So if they don't have a knowledge of reading, it's gonna bet hard for them to know, to experience all the things. - - Site5PFG05

The reason I like for my child to read, or to be read to by someone else is because it relieves their mind. When they are at school they do many subjects. Then the child has a full day, and then they get to school around seven. Children don't come home early, at around seven you are able to take out a book and read, or they take a book and you read for them. My child is read to by their older brother. Their brother reads for them and I can see that their mind is opening up. My child was not interested in books before, I don't want to lie to you. They did not like books. They didn't even like school. But now because they are in this Nal'ibali program, they have interest. When they read for themselves it's like they don't quite understand. When someone else is reading for them, like an older person, you know that they will explain the relevant parts, for example 'the dog barked'. The child won't read it that way, it must be read to them by an older person. They will read it as a child would. But when

another person reads for you, you are able to visualise things as if they are really happening. So that's why I like reading, because it opens up the child's mind – Site2PFG1012

Another parent believes that it is important to read to children because it opens up their minds. They are able to learn right from wrong through reading.

Kubaluleke kakhulu ukufundela abantwana izitori ngoba kaloku, baye ubafunde ukumamela pha okokuqala. Ukumamela babone kengoku uba le into akufunekanga siyenze. Umzekelo be bekhe ndaba fundela ibali lika tamkhulu owaye godola , wahamba emahlathini, wachola inyoka wayisizela. Uba lenyoka iyagodola wayifaka empokothweni, yajika yamluma kengoku inyoka. Uyabona kengoku, ubafundela into yokuba uyakwazi uba nosizi kanti lento izakwenzakalisa, uyisizele into kanti izakwenzakalisa, ewe into ezinjalo - Site1PFG05

According to parents, reading also helps the children become more engaged in conversations.

Like I say, they will read and read and read, then after we talk about it, they explain about what they're wanting, we end up making examples according to real, our real-life. It's like a Bible, it's like going to church. A pastor will open a scripture, you will read a scripture, then he's going to preach about that. It could, it can take even the whole day, one line you can talk eyyy, 2 hours.

Another parent believes that it is important to read to children because reading is another way to get children interested. According to the parent, when you tell a child something they are often uninterested. But when you read that same thing for them and explainit, you will find that they become curious and ask questions trying to understand more. Additionally, reading helps parents understand their children better.

The following section provides a detailed explanation of the materials available in the local languages as well as parental views on the importance of being able to read in different languages.

Availability of materials in local languages

The materials available in reading clubs are mainly in the local languages, isiXhosa in the Eastern Cape andisiZulu and Sesotho in Gauteng, supplemented by English materials. In the Eastern Cape, the reading club leader visited in Site 2 noted that they mostly use isiXhosa resources because the children in the reading club speak isiXhosa as their home language and go to local schools in the township which use isiXhosa as the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT). This is the same for the ECD sites and the foundation phase classroom visited in Site 1 and Site 3. In Gauteng, the reading clubs in Site 4 and Site 5 as well as the ECD sites mainly use isiZulu and Sesotho whichare the two languages that are predominantly used in the areas.

All respondents noted that there are enough materials in their relevant home languages. Children in Gauteng specifically requested English language resources, while in the Eastern Cape, where they use more of isiXhosa resources, the availability of English language resources does not appear to be a problem

Most of the learners in Site 2 confirmed having seen and using bilingual stories in their reading club. The use of bilingual stories was also confirmed by the reading club leader. In Site 3, learners do not have access to bilingual stories as confirmed by most learners and the Grade 2 teacher. The teacher specifically noted;

"I have not gotten there yet. I hope that as I am using the Nal'ibali material I will get to that point but for now I am just using the isiXhosa ones."

AN EVALUATION OF THE SUITABILITY OF THE NAL'IBALI STORY MATERIALS

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In Gauteng, most children do not seem to be aware of bilingual stories. However, in Site 4, the reading club leader noted that they do use bilingual stories.

> *I try not to concentrate in one language. Remember, we have to accommodate everyone… I would read a Zulu book and translate it in Sotho. Or maybe you read it in Sotho translate it in Zulu, so that everybody gets to understand what the story is about."*

Generally, parents believe that it is important to be able to read in both home language and English. Firstly, there is an understanding of the importance of home language for providing a foundation for children, and secondly, an understanding of the importance of English as a widespread global language.

'For I home language, I advantage is that they get familiar with I home language yabo. More especially eza grade zisezantsi. And then for I English, I strongly believe it is best uba bakwazi ukufunda I English. Because we leave in a country where apho iyi language of instruction. So they can do more when they can understand English.

One parent in Site 2 emphasised that although it is useful to understand English because it is such a widely used language, it is also important for the home language to serve as a foundation. English should support the home language. The parent noted that speaking to children in their home language is important because it teaches them their mother tongue. When you know your home language, you understand things and are able to communicate better. The parent used an example of how they grew up in Cape Town and went to coloured schools and as a result they struggle with isiXhosa. They even struggle with helping their child who is in Grade 1 with homework and usually ask the older cousins to assist.

The issue of children being disadvantaged through knowing only one language was also highlighted by Nal'ibali staff, on the ground with them claiming that parents in the Eastern Cape are happy to encounter bilingual stories. Parents like isiXhosa, however they are also worried about their children not knowing English. The bilingual stories are a useful method of mitigating this challenge.

'For home language, the advantage is that they get familiar with their home language. More especially the lower grades. And then for English, I strongly believe it is best that they be able to read in English. Because we live in a country where it is the language of instruction. So they can do more when they can understand English.' - Site3PFG

Below are excerpts from parents' responses on the importance of being able to read in the different languages

> *Bendizakukuthi mna isiXhosa siya developer kubo, xangabana bemana beqhubekeka befunda.Lanto ibangela into yokuba, abantwana bangonqeni nobhala, bangonqeni no funda isiXhosa.*

> *I would say that isiXhosa develops them as they continue reading. That allows them not to be lazy to write, not to be lazy to read in isiXhosa – Site3PFG*

> *The advantage is that they will understand it, what they are reading about in our vernac. But really, in other languages, English, Afrikaans, for our kids, because they attend Zulu schools, Sotho schools, vernac schools, so for others, it will take time to understand if they start just reading English, so it's,*

for advantage for vernac, it's for them to understand what they're reading about. Understand, it's more understanding than reading in English. Yeah, but eventually, when they're reading vernac then, they go and reading English also, they will get there." Still prioritize English, 50-50, as is a common ground, but "in order to know the other language, you must know your language first. Start with yours, then the other.""When you read in English, you try to translate in vernac.""They write more English. But when they speak, when they communicate amongst themselves, it's our vernac.

I think naxana befunda nge English, it increases I vocabulary yabo. Because in most stories ezibhalwe nge English. Kubakhona amagama a highlightwa in black okanye in bold. Then ibekhona kengoku I meaning yawo, ecaleni ibene box yawo. So that umntwana azokuyazi ukuba elagama li highlightiweyo, okanye elagama li bold lithetha ukuthini, alifunda pha ecaleni.

I think even when they read in English, it increases their vocabulary. Because in most stories that are written in English there are some words that are highlighted in black or bold. Then their meaning is provided in a box next to the word so that the child can know what that highlighted or bold word means. – Site3PFG

So makafunda ngesiLungu is that ibanceda ngama subjects abawenzayo.

So learning in English helps them with the subjects that they are doing - Site3PFG

And kengoku umntwana okwazi ukufunda nge siXhosa qha, u limited kanti.
And a child that can read in isiXhosa only is limited. In terms of izifundo zakhe ne, as they get to higher grades bafunda nge English. And even let's say ubana mhlawumbi ufunde nge siXhosa sodwa. Maybe izinto ziye nzeka a drope out, ayo kufuna umsebenzi. Nowadays emisebenzini, it can be I domestic worker, it can be whatever. I instructions are in English, so… (In terms of their studies, as they get to higher grades they learn in English. And even let's say that maybe they only learn in isiXhosa – maybe they drop out and goes to look for work. Nowadays with jobs, it can be a domestic worker, it can be whatever, the instructions are in English so…) - Site3PFG